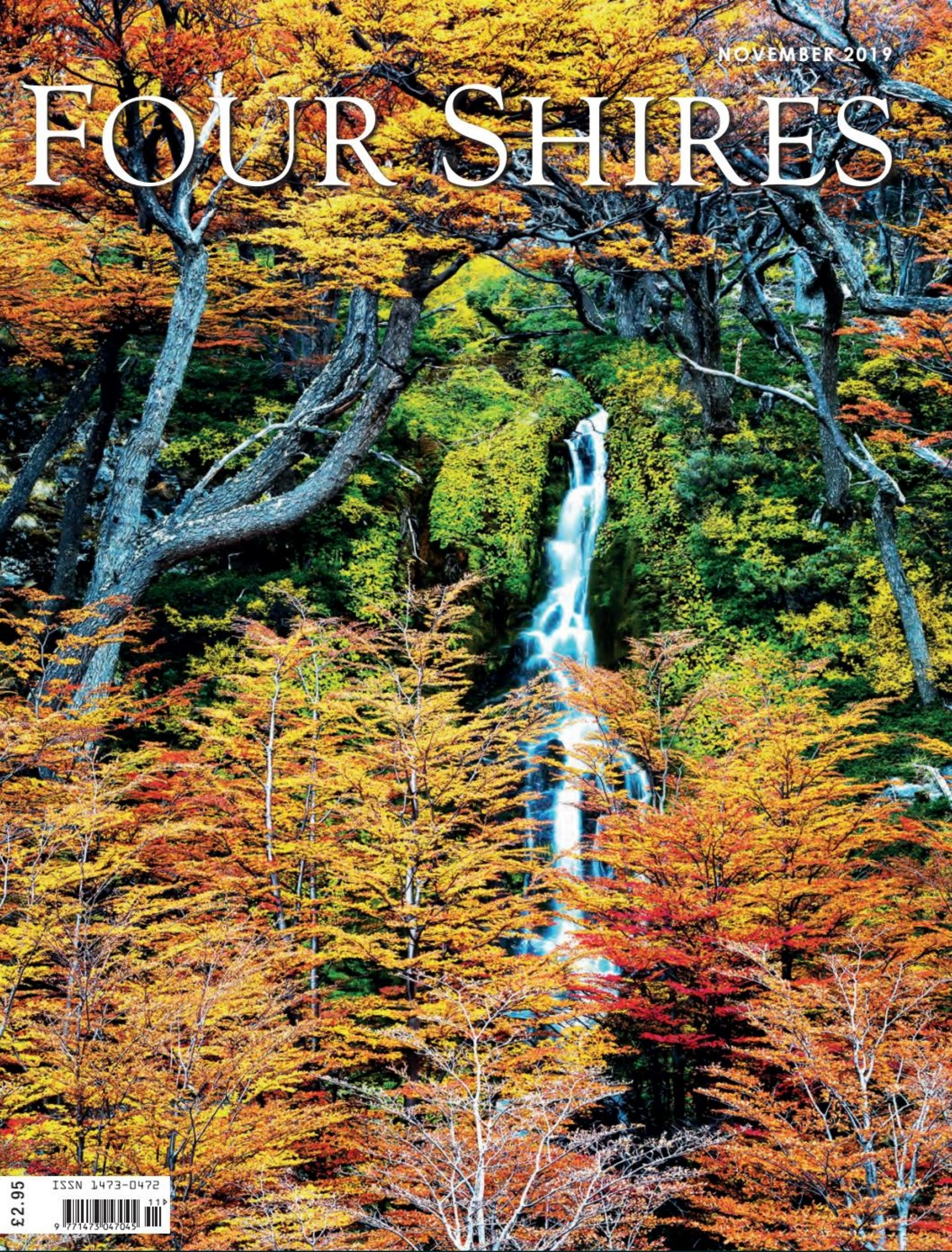

NOVEMBER 2019

FOUR SHIRES

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FROM THE EDITOR

WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF *FOUR SHIRES*

The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.

I enjoy the autumn, it's the start of the year for me. I enjoy seeing the trees start to turn. At the moment there's an avenue of acers in a local car park that perfectly illustrates the range of golden browns, yellows and golds that can be seen in the foliage of many of our trees. Our cover picture this month shows those autumn colours in all their glory.

Of course, the picture wasn't taken in Whichford Woods but the competition, The International Garden Photographer of the Year, regularly sees entries from our talented *Four Shires* photographers. We thought 'Autumn in Patagonia' deserved a front page…

If you're a forager, now's the best time of year for mushrooms (and toadstools). They seem to be springing up everywhere. I remember many years ago, *Four Shires* got hold of a copy of 'Food for Free' by Richard Mabey. It detailed the bountiful harvest that can be gleaned from hedgerows and fields in the area and it was an eye opener! Of course, the average field mushroom is very tasty, puffballs look like alien spacecraft and shaggy inkcaps can give you a headache. The real finds are the chanterelles and morels. These are very tasty and if you had to buy them in a supermarket they'd cost you a fair penny. One of my friends in France picks mushrooms at this time of year that sell for upwards of 60 euros a kilo. Truffles, of course, command the very highest prices and their whereabouts is a closely guarded secret.

If you do go hunting the fungi be aware that you should only really be collecting for your own consumption! Stories of gangs of mushroom hunters ripping up the New Forest are probably a little far fetched, but it would be a pity to spoil the fun.

Be careful if you go out and pick your own.

There are, of course, many species out there that can kill. You MUST be SURE that the mushrooms you eat are non-toxic. Any mushrooms that stain your fingers must be avoided… If in doubt, don't eat them!

We have been building up to the most momentous weekend this country has seen for many years. It doesn't matter what side of the political spectrum you're on. By this time next month, we'll know for sure… will it be England or Wales who are the Rugby World Cup Champions?

I hope you enjoy the November issue… take a look at our guide detailing the best of the local Christmas fairs – there is sure to be one close to you.

JEREMY WILTON

MEET THE FOUR SHIRES' TEAM

"The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness"

John Keats

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Whether you love the excitement of festive shopping or find the whole experience a terrible trial, we have tips and ideas that can make this year's shopping a delight. There are also gifts and markets that will thrill you and your family.

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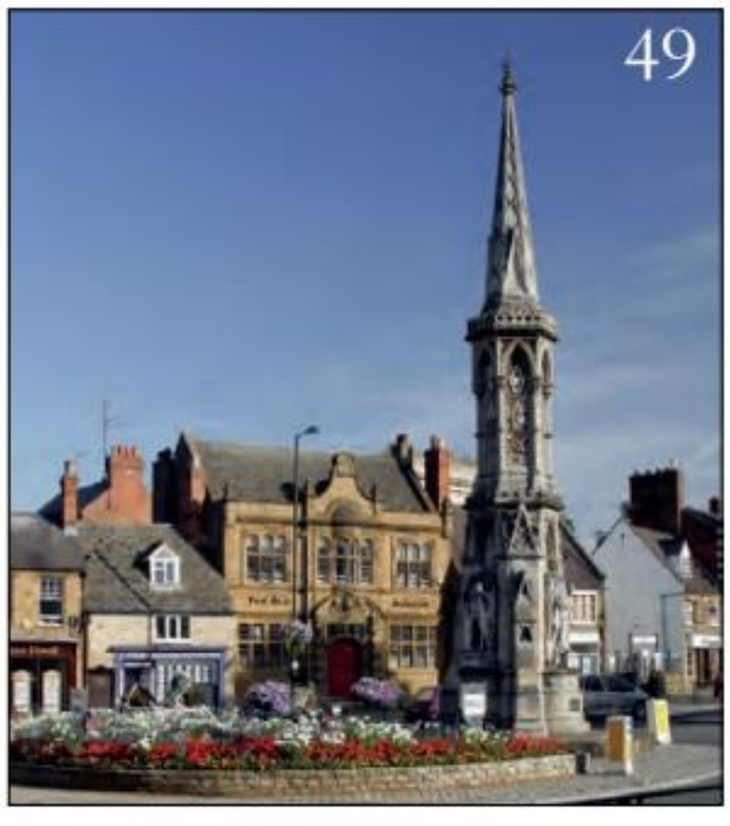

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GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

Dog loves to hear about a pup related success story, so he was very happy to hear about the recent Guiness World Record attempt taken on by Warwickshire based charity Guide Dogs for The Blind. Last month hundreds of guide dogs, retired guide dogs, and pet dogs took part in (what is hoped to be a world record) doggy photoshoot at Warwick racecourse.

It was anticipated that more than 800 dogs would be attending and with the previous record set at 374, it is hoped that Guide Dogs for the Blind was successful.

At the time of going to print dog had not heard if the attempt was a record breaker but he certainly has his paws crossed for his charity pals.

REMEMBER, REMEMBER, THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER...

Dog is not a huge fan of the week surrounding the 5th of this month.

Whilst many humans will be out enjoying brilliant firework displays, dog will very much be hiding in the corner shaking.

Dog was sent these great tips to help his friends stay calm during this yearly tradition.

Act normally around your dog: Pretend as though the fireworks aren't happening. Be cheerful and playful around your dog. If your dog comes to you for comfort, stroke and cuddle them. Sometimes, dogs might run and hide under the bed or in their crate. If this happens, do not chase your dog down. Just check on them periodically.

Play white noise or music: Turning on a television also works well. While the noise may not completely drown out the fireworks, it can reduce the impact of the fireworks on your dog. Do not turn the music on louder than you normally would in your home however, otherwise the dog may become aware that something is different.

Close the curtains: The bright, flashing lights of fireworks can also cause alarm. Your dog might feel more secure if you shut the blinds or curtains.

Distract your dog with a game or a puzzle treat: Giving your dog something to do will help them ignore the fireworks. You can play a game, such as tug of war or fetch. You might also give it a toy filled with peanut butter or a treat dispensing puzzle toy.

PALMA BOOBS

Dog was sorry to hear about his master's favourite travel company Thomas Cook going into liquidation. Staff at the local branch had been extremely helpful when it came to repatriating his mistress at the end of last year. Dog understood that many holidaymakers were stranded at Palma airport so it was with a little chuckle then, that he remembered the highly polished part of the Majorcan airport's Fernando Botero sculpture (pictured).

PRESCOTE MANOR

I have just received the October edition and noticed the article about Richard Crossman (left and below) stating that he was born at Prescote Manor, Cropredy. In fact, he married Anne McDougal who lived at Prescote Manor. She was the daughter of J P McDougal (below left), one of the founders of Midland Marts. He did live there after his marriage.

Also Prescote is a parish in its own right, although it's closely connected to Cropredy. Its correct address is Prescote, Nr Banbury.

David Cherry

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AROUND THE SHIRES

BURFORD AND OXFORD IN TOP 20

Oxford has been ranked sixth best destination in the UK for an autumn 'staycation'. Burford's ranked number 20 on the list.

HomeToGo's list of the 20 best destinations in the UK for autumn considered everything from the average temperature and rainfall to the number of family friendly attractions and restaurants.

Oxford was number six on the list and scored particularly highly for items such as restaurant choices and family friendly activities. Oxford's range of city centre hotels makes a staycation in the city hassle free and accessible.

For brisk autumn walks in rolling hills, the Cotswolds are great. Burford is justifiably labelled one of the most picturesque towns in England. With its medieval bridge, old stone houses and attractive Tudor and Georgian frontages, Burford is a beautiful setting for an autumn escape.

ST MARY'S CHURCH CHARLBURY CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

5th – 8th December

The St Mary's Church Christmas Tree Festival is aiming to bring people, local organisations, charities and schools together, each decorating their own Christmas tree in the church.
As well as the display of trees (and the regular café), there will be a number of other additional events. This includes an opening party, a school choir concert, an organ recital, a family concert, a Christmas Market and a *Songs of Praise* service. The money raised by the festival will be donated to the St Mary's roof appeal.
www.stmaryscharlbury.co.uk

• *Sir Jackie Stewart and Rover-BRM painting*

SIR JACKIE STEWART UNVEILS NEW ROVER-BRM PAINTING AT THE BRITISH MOTOR MUSEUM

Sir Jackie Stewart unveiled a new oil painting of himself driving the Rover-BRM gas turbine racing car in 1965 at the British Motor Museum recently. The painting was commissioned by the museum following a very generous donation from David Owen OBE and Rubery Owen.

When asked what the car was like to drive, Sir Jackie commented "It was bloody awful but there was nothing like it at the time! Driving the car at Le Mans was a revolution. The painting, too, is wonderful and a real piece of history. Michael is one of the best motor racing artists and there are not many artists that can approach what this man can do. I have many of his paintings at home and in Switzerland. Its not easy to portray the cars in the right way, for example to get the tyres to behave accurately - but Michael does it".

CHRISTMAS AT CHASTLETON: A VICTORIAN YULETIDE

Saturday 23rd - Sunday 24th Nov, Saturday 30th Nov - Sunday 1st December, Saturday 7th - Sunday 8th December, 11am-3pm (last entry to the house 2:30pm)

Enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of a 'Victorian Yuletide' over three special weekends at Chastleton this Christmas. Explore the house and gardens and find out about how the Whitmore-Jones family prepared and celebrated Christmas here in the 19th century. Dress up warm as the house can be cold at this time of year!

TOWCESTER RACECOURSE TO REMAIN CLOSED

The British Horseracing Authority has announced Towcester Racecourse has been permanently closed. The course went into administration with debts of more than £1.3m in August 2018. Administrators for the previous management company announced they had sold assets in November, but racing did not resume at the course and its owners have sold its remaining 10 fixtures to the Arena Racing Company.

Racing first took place at Towcester Racecourse in 1876 and was the stage for legendary jockey AP McCoy's landmark 4,000th career win in 2013.

DISCOUNTED TICKETING SCHEME AT COMPTON VERNEY

Following a visitor's heart attack during filming of the *Antiques Roadshow* at Compton Verney, the museum has launched a discounted ticket scheme.

John Putt from Rugby charmed *BBC Midlands Today* and local ceramics expert Will Farmer with his collection of *Clarice Cliff* tea and coffee cups. However, as he made his way back to his car he collapsed. CPR was given by two members of Compton Verney's team and a member of the public. Their fast action, combined with a quick response from St John's Ambulance, NHS Ambulance and Warwickshire and Northampton Air Ambulance paramedics, meant John's life was saved.

• ***John Putt being filmed***

To thank and honour our emergency services, Compton Verney is introducing a new, discounted, buy one get one free admission for all staff working in fire, police, military and NHS services. This builds upon a discount already offered to armed forces personnel as part of the Armed Forces Covenant, which the venue signed in 2017, particularly in support of those based at the nearby Kineton barracks.

THE TOWERSEY FESTIVAL MOVES TO CLAYDON ESTATE

Towersey Festival, the UK's longest running independent music event will move to a wonderful new site for its 56th year. Taking place from 28th to 31st August 2020 the festival's new home will be the Claydon Estate (pictured left), situated between Bicester and Milton Keynes.

Five years ago the festival moved from its original site in Towersey village to another area close to the village but search continued for a perfect location.

"We wanted somewhere that would win the hearts of our visitors" explains Festival Director Joe Heap. "We are thrilled to have found a site that is so keen to work with us for the future of the event. A site that offers such natural beauty and a great blank canvas for us to create a Towersey Festival for the future".

Artists already confirmed for the 2020 festival include *Kate Rusby*, the new four piece line up of *Show of Hands, Steeleye Span, Grace Petrie, This Is the Kit* and *The Hackney Colliery Band*.

OXFORD HALF MARATHON

Last month 44 fundraisers took part in the Oxford Half Marathon on behalf of the RAF Benevolent Fund, collectively raising almost £4,000 for the RAF's leading welfare charity.

Amongst the participants was RAF Benevolent Fund Ambassador Corporal Rob Bugden, who pushed his way around the 13.1 mile course in his wheelchair. Rob was involved in a parachute accident when he collided with his colleague mid air whilst on exercise in California. The accident left him with severe injuries and he is now a tetraplegic with complex care needs.

This is the second time Rob has completed the course, having finished in three hours and 52 minutes in 2018. This year he was delighted to beat that time by 30 minutes.

THE RETURN OF THE HORNTON ANGLO-SAXON BROOCH

Curators at Banbury Museum are incredibly excited to announce that a collection of jewellery found in Hornton near Banbury is being returned and showcased for all to see. The 'hoard' was discovered in the late 19th century on glebe land just west of the church and is believed to have been owned by a woman from the 6th century AD.

The discovery of the Anglo Saxon grave was made whilst a house was being built and the collection was acquired by a French dealer who later sold it to the British Museum where it has stayed until now. The fine pieces of jewellery will be returned to the area on a long term loan from the British Museum and displayed in Banbury Museum.

The collection includes a beautiful large gilded bronze brooch, two identically decorated round brooches, crystal and glass beads. The British Museum has dated the jewellery to the 6th century, between 500 to 550AD.

Simon Townsend, Director of Banbury Museum said: "We were delighted to work with our friends in the Hornton History Group, to return this beautiful Anglo Saxon jewellery to North Oxfordshire, where it was once worn by one of our ancestors. These treasures illustrate our rich local history, and now they will be available for all to see".

Banbury Museum are marking the occasion by hosting a very special evening on 16th November offering a first look at the brooches and beads as well as a talk about Oxfordshire's Anglo Saxon ancestors. After 140 years the collection returns and will be unveiled formally by John Blair, Professor of Medieval History and Archaeology, Queens College Oxford, who will give the talk, The Early Anglo Saxons in Oxfordshire: New Evidence and New Ideas, referring to the Hornton brooches.

TOWN MAYOR'S TOY APPEAL

Once again, this year the Banbury 'Town Mayor's Toy Appeal' will commence the day after the Christmas Lights are switched on.

People are being asked to take new or 'like new' toys to the town hall between 25th and 29th November. Those toys donated will then be distributed by the Sunshine Centre to families in need this Christmas.

KINETON CHRISTMAS TREE TRAIL

Kineton, Warwickshire, 29th November and throughout December

500 themed and decorated Christmas trees will be placed around the villages of Kineton and Little Kineton with a map to complete a walking trail around them all. See how many you can find, and vote on your favourite! Costs will be nominal for the maps, with all profits going to local charities. The grand switch on and launch of the trail will be on Friday 29th November at 5.45pm as part of the Kineton Victorian Christmas Fayre and the trail will remain in place throughout the whole of December.

National Trust

Travel back in time this Christmas at Chastleton House

Sat & Sun 23-24 Nov, 30 Nov-1 Dec & 7-8 Dec 11am-3pm (Last entry 2.45pm)

Experience the house dressed for a traditional Victorian Yuletide.
Standard admission applies, NT members free

Call 01608 674981 for details
Visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chastleton-house
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Photo © National Trust Images/Peter Greenway
The National Trust is an independent registered charity, number 205846

NEW BANBURY WOODLAND PLANNED TO CAPTURE CARBON

Plans to plant 30,000 trees in Banbury Country Park are advancing, as the council ramps up its response to the climate emergency.

Cherwell District Council's plan for the park has been brought forward by two years, thanks to a partnership with local distribution company DCS Group UK - Banbury. The company is investing £40,000 of funding for trees to help offset its carbon footprint.

Banbury Country Park is set to officially open in 2022 and the woodland being planted over winter will be one of its five character areas.

MIDDLETON CHENEY LIBRARY EVENTS

7th November at 7.30pm

Film of the Month:-***Going in Style*** (12) Adult £6/Child £4, including ice cream.

Thursday, 21st November

Local children's authors A.P. Bazeley, Kate Arnold, Gillian Badger and Illustrator Eleanor Budson. Adult £6/ Child £4, including wine and soft drinks.

Tickets available in Middleton Cheney from: Library, Butler's Pantry and Macintyers Estate Agents or on-line at www.ticketsource.co.uk/MCLSG

FOOTBALL FOR THE DISABLED

Banbury Football Club has set up a new disability football club for boys and girls aged between five and eight years. With the support of Oxfordshire FA, it runs every Sunday form 12.30pm-1.30pm on the astroturf at Frank Wise School on Hornbeam Close. For more information contact Ricky at rickyreajnr@yahoo.com

FEASTIVAL AT LONG FURLONG FARM

23rd November, 12pm-8pm

Long Furlong Farm, Catesby, in partnership with Taste Events, are hosting a family friendly Feastival.

This family friendly event is a great way to get friends and family together to enjoy great food, drink and entertainment. There will be a selection of wonderful street food and refreshments, including; Wood Fired Artisan Pizza, Smoked House Ribs and Wings, Mac n Cheese, Gourmet Burgers, Indian Spiced Bar, Crepes, Local Boutique Gins, Mulled Cider, Real Hot Chocolate.

Local Band *Norton Soul*, will be providing the soundtrack to the event with their repertoire of pop, soul, funk, Motown and disco.

Tickets are free via Eventbrite or call 07376 360472.

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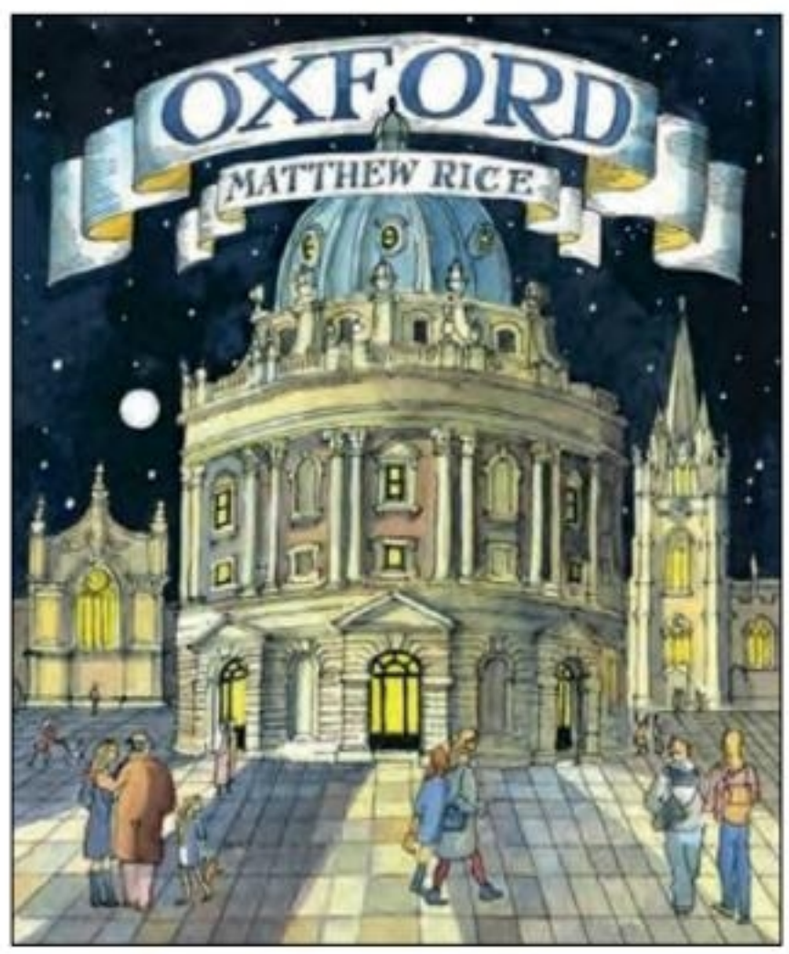
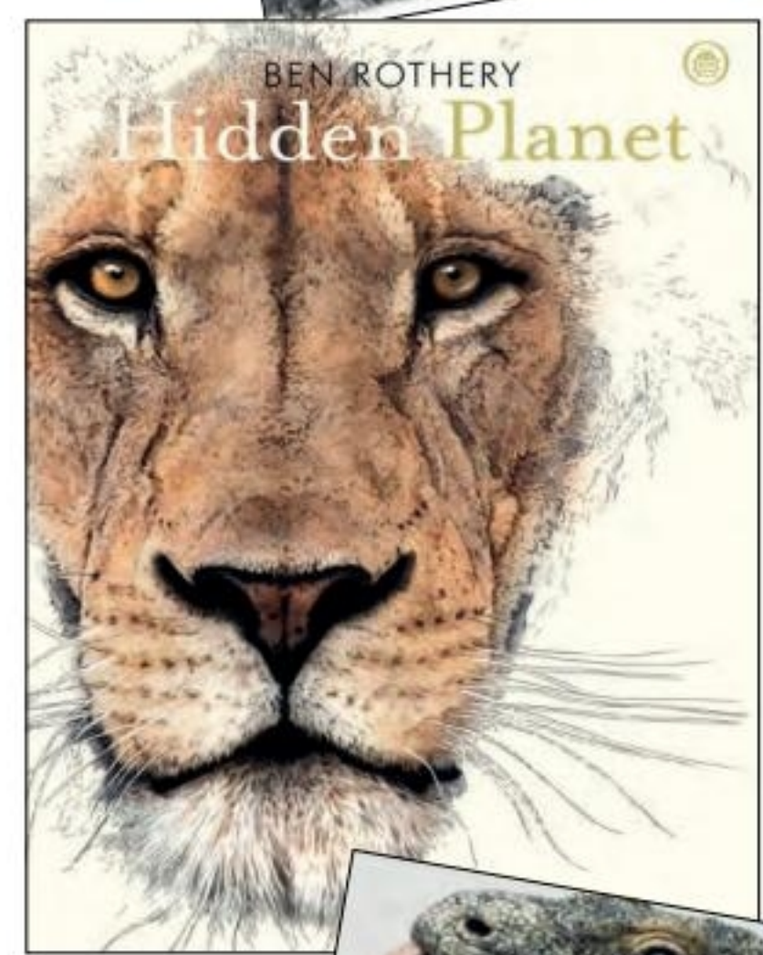


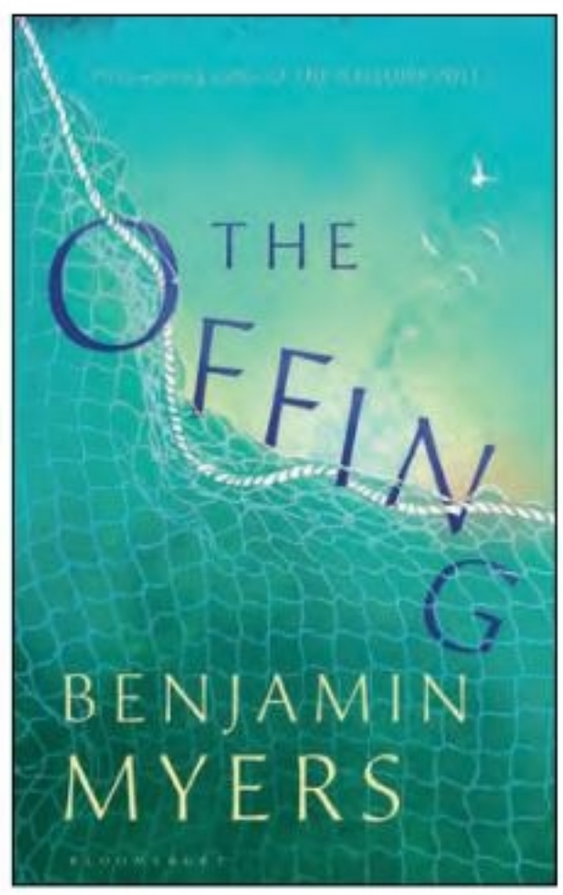
THE OFFING

The Offing by Benjamin Myers is a beautifully observed story of a young man just after the end of the Second World War who, having left school in Co. Durham decides to walk south and see where the road leads him. He makes it as far as Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire and there he meets a middle aged woman who offers him a place to stay in a shed on her land and in exchange he lends a helping hand about the place. The evocation of the Yorkshire countryside in summertime is a joy and the quiet, affectionate relationship between the woman and the young man has a profound effect on both their lives. The author previously wrote ***The Gallows Pole*** which received great acclaim. £16.99



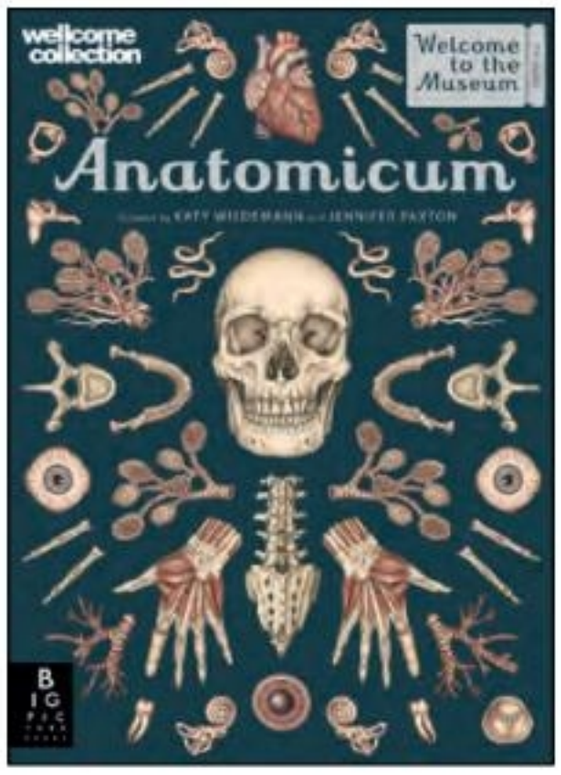
OXFORD

Oxford's buildings are some of the jewels of European architecture and offer an unrivalled collection of fine English buildings through the centuries. Focussing on architectural detail, Matthew Rice's watercolour illustrations and accompanying text describe how the city has been shaped by its history. £30



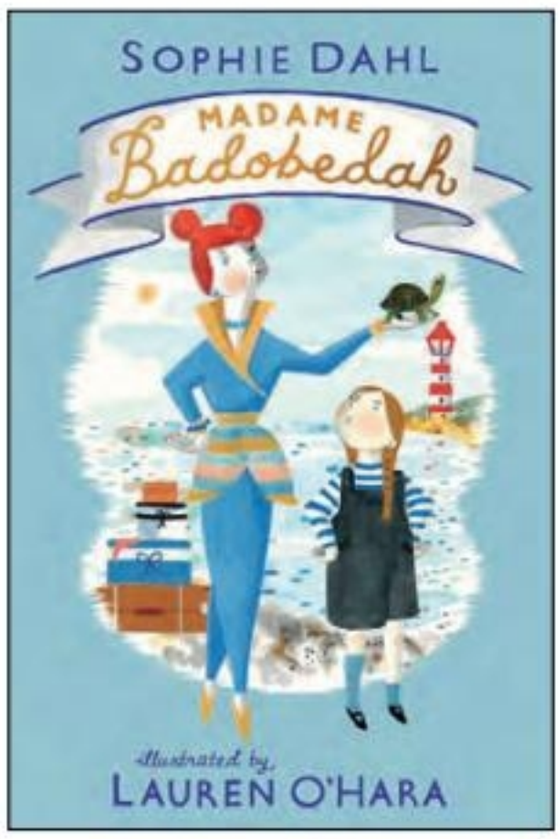
HIDDEN PLANET

Hidden Planet by Ben Rothery, is subtitled, *An Illustrator's Love Letter to Planet Earth.* It's a book that will appeal to all ages. It's full of stunning illustrations of many animals and birds from around the world, some endangered and some not. There's plenty of accompanying text giving the reader an idea of the wonders and diversity of the natural world. £20



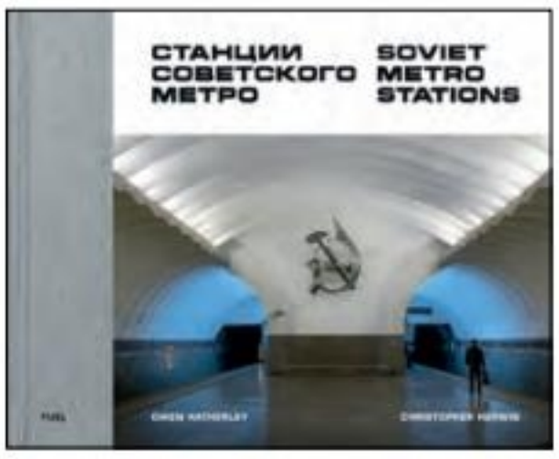
ANATOMICUM

Anatomicum, written by Professor Jennifer Paxton, is the 2019 offering from the ***Welcome to the Museum Guide*** series. Probably aimed at children but to be enjoyed by everyone, this is a feast of anatomical knowledge using outstanding illustrations to guide us through the workings of the human body. Our price is £18 (rrp £25).



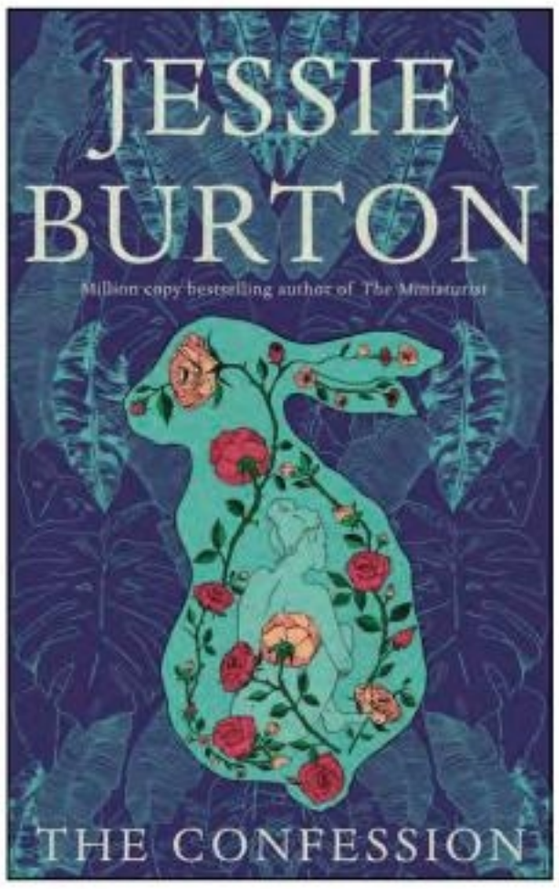
MADAME BADOBEDAH

Another one for children is by Sophie Dahl, ***Madame Badobedah***. Mabel lives with her parents in a seaside hotel and Mabel loves to watch the comings and goings of the guests. One day a very interesting lady arrives, she keeps a tortoise for a pet, has an enormous amount of luggage and no one is entirely sure of her name. Mabel is highly suspicious. A fun book for younger children. £12.99



SOVIET METRO STATIONS

Soviet Metro Stations promises to be just as much a cult classic as its predecessor ***Soviet Bus Stops***. This book is a must for lovers of totalitarian regimes and their architecture. There are some amazing examples of public spaces, all built to enhance the reputation of a Soviet nirvana. £24.95



THE CONFESSION

Jessie Burton's new novel, ***The Confession*** has been hailed as her best yet. Rose Simmons' mother disappeared when she was a baby and, years later, Rose discovers that the last person to have seen her Mother is Connie Holden, a writer, who became reclusive at the height of her fame. Rose is drawn to Connie in search of answers. £16.99

TO BED ON THURSDAYS

Jenny Selby-Green entered the idiosyncratic world of the provincial press by answering a 'Sits Vac' ad for a newspaper reporter (conveniently ignoring that they were looking for a young man). She quickly learned that being the sole female on staff brought few advantages. Even in the 1950s, it was a business tied up in archaic practices, driven by deadlines and a despotic editor called 'God' by his staff. In the course of her work, Jenny was bullied by Robert Maxwell, snubbed by President Eisenhower, entranced by Sophie Loren and stalked by a delusional actor named Nigel, but mostly she worked valiantly to bring order to the chaos of provincial life and its assortment of anonymous characters by writing about it. Set in Aylesbury and district, ***To Bed on Thursdays*** is her delightful memoir of a simpler, slower paced age when newsgathering was still an honorable trade and newspapers were impartial observers of life. Published by Mosaique Press, £6.99. ISBN 978-1-906852-17-7

STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Stratford Literary Festival will be packing some of the most respected writers and veteran broadcasters into a weekend of events running from 1st to 3rd November.

A busy schedule will include veteran broadcasters Sir Trevor McDonald (left) and John Humphrys, as he hangs up his BBC Radio 4 Today programme headphones for the last time, and both will be discussing the highlights of their careers, their interviews with world leaders and the world affairs they have covered over the decades. Historian Sir Max Hastings reveals details of his new book on the Dam Buster raids. David Parker reveals never before seen footage of Laurie Lee talking about his beloved Cotswolds. Finally the legendary Jenny Eclair takes us from stand up to sit down with life as a novelist.

For families, there'll be loads of half term fun for all ages with comedian Ben Miller meeting Father Christmas, the hilarious Andy Seed exploring all things gross, celebrating 50 years of ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar*** with the chance to help build a giant one, and the opportunity to explore the story with sensory stimulation through ***Arty Splatz***. ***The Word Wizards*** will be letting you in on the naughty vocabulary of Roald Dahl, and events for children round off with some ***Really Big Pants Theatre Company*** storytelling fun.

All events take place at the Stratford Play House, United Reformed Church or Hotel du Vin.

WILDLIVES: 50 EXTRAORDINARY ANIMALS THAT MADE HISTORY

In this fascinating and touching book written by local Oxfordshire author Ben Lerwill, children can learn about 50 courageous creatures from around the world and throughout history. This captivating collection gathers heart warming, surprising and often emotionally powerful stories of bravery, discovery and friendship. Young readers will discover some of the most famous and unforgettable animals of all time. Compelling and visually arresting, this is the perfect introduction to some of the amazing animals whose lives have made history. £16.99, ISBN: 9781788005098

OUT AND ABOUT

WHAT'S ON IN THE *FOUR SHIRES* THIS MONTH

MAKING TRACKS

The North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Oxford OX2 7JN, 4th November, 7:30pm

Since 2010, *Making Tracks* has brought world class and diverse music from all corners of the globe to a network of top venues throughout the UK. Relaunching this year, *Making Tracks'* ambitious new model brings together emerging artists from around the world to celebrate unique musical traditions, initiate new collaborations and contribute towards a global network of socially and environmentally engaged musicians. Part of a UK tour, this concert will feature solo and collaborative performances from each of *Making Tracks'* 2019 Fellows.

contact@thenorthwall.com

PINOCCHIO

Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford OX1 2AQ, 4th - 9th November, 7.30pm-10pm

The misadventures of *Pinocchio*, the boy made of wood who longs to be a real child, are brought to the Oxford stage this November in a modern adaptation by Oxford Theatre Guild. Older children and adults both are bound to find this treat of puppetry, physical theatre and original music intriguing, entertaining and just a little bit scary as the

lonely toy makes his way in a strange world of colourful characters, with not even his wits to fall back on. Family entertainment with a dark twist as the nights draw in.

www.oldfirestation.org.uk

TOM PICKLES CELLO AND ROMAN KOSYAKOV PIANO

Christ Church, Priory Terrace, Leamington Spa CV31 1BA, 6th November, 7.30pm

The second of the 2019 Leamington prize winner's concerts features Sheffield born cellist Tom Pickles and Siberian pianist Roman Kosyakov. Tom is supported by 'Help Musicians UK', the Sheffield Church Burgesses Trust, the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and the Craxton Memorial Award, while Roman is a laureate and winner of national and international competitions, including Young Talents of Russia in 2016 and the Third Manhattan International Music Competition in 2018.

www.warwickdc.gov.uk

CATS: INFERNO

Rugby Theatre, Henry Street, Rugby CV21 2QA, 7th – 9th November, 7.30pm

The Christine Anderson Theatre School (CATS) dancers blaze onto the stage with *Inferno*, their annual show. These young people provide quality entertainment year on year and this year is no exception.

www.rugbytheatre.co.uk

FAMILY FOLK SHOW

Pegasus Theatre, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RE, 9th November, 4pm-4.45pm

Award winning folk duo *Megson* blend their infectious mix of heavenly vocals and lush harmonies into a gentle, entertaining concert designed especially for younger audiences. The show features children's folk songs old and new from their 'When I was a Lad' album. Suitable for children up to age 7, and their families.

www.pegasustheatre.org.uk

REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE, SERVICE AND WREATH LAYING

Starting at Banbury Town Centre, 10th November, 10am-1pm

Commemorating those who served their country in wars past. Remembering those who still serve their country to this day. Commencing with the town parade, it is followed by a service in St. Mary's Church, Banbury, before the wreath laying ceremony at the war memorial in People's Park.

www.banbury.gov.uk

GORDON BUCHANAN: ANIMAL FAMILIES AND ME

Royal and Derngate, Northampton NN1 1DP, 11th November, 7.30pm

Animal Families and Me promises a unique opportunity to hear personal recollections of globetrotting travels, as Gordon Buchanan delves into his world of weird, wild and wonderful wildlife. It's all illustrated with his own film footage and photography. With a reputation for relishing dangerous and tough assignments, his tales of challenging expeditions make for a thrilling evening not to be missed.

www.royalandderngate.co.uk

THE LOVELY BONES

Oxford Playhouse, Oxford OX1 2LW, 11th – 16th November, various times

Susie Salmon is just like any other young girl. She wants to be beautiful, adores her charm bracelet and has a crush on a boy from school. There's one big difference though – Susie is dead. Now she can only observe while her family manage their grief in their different ways. This acclaimed adaptation is an unforgettable play about life after loss. An exciting, emotional and uplifting theatrical experience that does full justice to Alice Sebold's best selling original novel.

www.oxfordplayhouse.com

MUSICA SECRETA

St Mary's Church, Warwick CV34 4RA, 12th November, 7.30pm

Directed by Deborah Roberts and Laurie Stras with Alison Kinder (bass viola), this is the second of the monthly concerts in the *Early Music at St Mary's Season, From Darkness into Light*. Direct from the Brighton Early Music Festival, the UK's premier female voice early music ensemble comes to Warwick presenting the complete setting of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah for Good Friday* by *Antoine Brumel* with works by *Compère, Moro, Mouton, des Prez*, and beautiful Gregorian chant, offering an unique insight into the musical life of a 16th century Italian convent.

Call 01926 497000 for tickets.

FUN WITH FLOWERS

Sarah Horne Flowers, 86 Warwick Street, Leamington Spa CV32 4QG, 13th November, 10am-3pm

A day of uplifting floral fun and your chance to create some stunning treats for your home! The course includes a one hour lunch break during which you can explore the beautiful town. Places are limited to six people per class and costs £99 per person, including all materials.

www.sarahhornebotanicals.com

AUSTENTATIOUS

The Core, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 1QG, 14th November, 8pm

Austentatious is an improvised comedy play starring a cast of the country's quickest comic performers. Every single show the cast conjures up a brand new 'lost' Jane Austen novel based on nothing more than a title suggested by the audience. Performed in period costume with live musical accompaniment, this is a Regency treat guaranteed to delight Austen novices and die-hard fans alike.

www.thecorecorby.com

WARWICK WORDS HISTORY FESTIVAL: NICOLA TALLIS

Lord Leycester Hospital, High Street, Warwick CV34 4BH, 15th November, 7.30pm

Historian and researcher, Nicola Tallis will discuss her

eagerly anticipated new book, *Uncrowned Queen*, the first comprehensive biography of Margaret Beaufort for three decades. Margaret Beaufort was the mother of the Tudor dynasty. As the battle for royal supremacy raged between the houses of Lancaster and York, Margaret, a descendant of Edward III, married Edmund Tudor, half brother to the Lancastrian king, Henry VI. She endured a traumatic birth that brought her and her son, Henry Tudor, close to death. She was just thirteen years old.

www.warwickwords.co.uk

SHIRT TAIL STOMPERS

The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury OX16 2PA, 16th November, 7.30pm

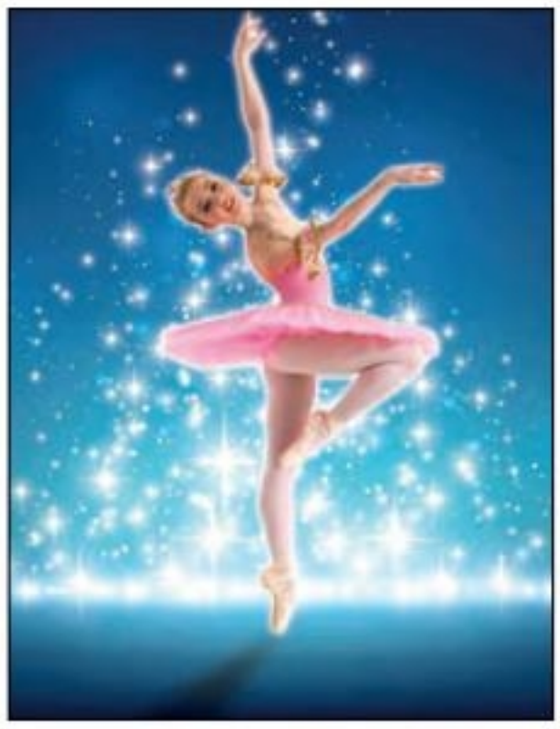
The Shirt Tail Stompers are firmly established at home and internationally playing Harlem swing and the hot jazz of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Featuring music from composers such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Benny Goodman, their goal is to make this early form of pop music popular again.

www.themillartscentre.co.uk

VIENNA FESTIVAL BALLET: THE NUTCRACKER

Royal Spa Centre, Royal Leamington Spa CV32 4HN, 1st November, 7.30-10.30pm

Be swept away on a magical adventure in one of the most



famous classical ballets of all time, *The Nutcracker*. With its combination of enchanting choreography and unforgettable music, this fabulous ballet is a Christmas treat like no other. Set to Tchaikovsky's sumptuous score, the traditional tale tells the story of Clara and her enchanted nutcracker doll.

www.warwickdc.gov.uk/royalspacentre

PALISANDER RECORDER QUARTET

Unitarian Chapel, High Street, Warwick CV34 4AX, 23rd November, 11:30am

A big hit in local schools and in their St Mary's concert in 2017, the *Palisander Recorder Quartet* returns to the area with a musical illustration of the side effects experienced by those encountering a spider in the 17th century, featuring works by *Dowland, Vivaldi* and *Byrd* along with traditional Italian *Tarantellas*. With coffee, sherry or squash included in the ticket, this is a concert for children of all ages! Adults £12.50, children £6, family ticket (2 adults and 2 children) £32.

www.palisanderrecorders.com

MRS B'S BOYS COMEDY DINING EXPERIENCE

The Deco Theatre, Northampton NN1 4AE, 23rd November, 7.30pm-11pm

Ireland's most famous Mammy is back with her own Christmas comedy dinner show. That's nice! Mrs B is hosting a festive soiree, but things aren't quite going to plan. For a start, she didn't realise you were all coming! Now, with the help of her friends and family, Mrs B must attempt to remain in the Christmas spirit whilst feeding and entertaining you. Filled with tomfoolery and chock full of cheekiness. A festive feast for fans of the classic sitcom! An interactive comedy dinner show with a three course Christmas dinner included. *Please note this is a Mrs Brown Lookalike.

www.thedeco.co.uk

BURFORD SINGERS: VERDI REQUIEM

Church of St John the Baptist, Church Green, Burford OX18 4RY, 24th November, 7.30pm-9.30pm

This concert will feature the *Burford Singers* with Linda Richardson (soprano), Marta Fontanals-Simmons (mezzo), Ben Thapa (tenor), Freddie Long (bass). The Cotswold Chamber Orchestra is lead by Kate Bailey and conducted by Brian Kay.

tickets@burfordsingers.org.uk

NARNIA BUSINESS

The Story Museum, 42 Pembroke Street, Oxford OX1 1BP, 30 November, 11am-12pm

Join the storyteller guide and retrace C.S Lewis' much loved stories through special locations across Oxford. These hour long walks are full of puzzles, games and lots of joining in. Suitable for ages 3+.

boxoffice@storymuseum.org

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

St Mary's Church, Old Square, Warwick CV34 4RA, 28th November and 8th December

The Collegiate Church of St Mary's is the beautiful setting for the annual Christmas Tree Festival that opens on Warwick Town Victorian evening. Visitors can vote for their favourite Christmas tree and be entered in the prize draw. All the trees are individually decorated by the community and local businesses to celebrate the spirit of Christmas and be inspired by local people and organisations. Craft stalls and the St Mary's gift shop be open.

www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk

National Trust

Explore traditions

at Upton House and Gardens and Canons Ashby

Visit Upton with the family this Christmas and get involved in traditional activities from stirring the Upton Christmas pudding, to meeting Father Christmas. Over at Canon's Ashby, experience Christmas from different times in history as you explore the beautiful festive house.

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nationaltrust.org.uk/uptonhouse | nationaltrust.org.uk/canonsashby

IGPOTY BLENHEIM EXHIBITION AND COMPETITION

Our glorious cover picture this month was part of the IGPOTY competition 2019. Here are the details for the 2020 competition.

IGPOTY and Blenheim Palace have again teamed up to offer a unique free to enter special award to celebrate the beauty of this extraordinary location.

Use photography to capture the enduring beauty of Blenheim Palace and the majesty of the 2,000 acre Capability Brown designed landscape. This unique UNESCO World Heritage Site is a perfect location for all types of garden photography with several *Sites of Special Scientific Interest*, including the Great Lake and the ancient oaks in High Park. From secret gardens to open parkland, Blenheim Palace is a photographer's dream.

Who can enter?

This free to enter special award is open to everyone over 18 and is a chance to explore and capture one of the world's most famous landscapes and its hidden treasures through photography.

Selected winners will form part of an exclusive exhibition at the IGPOTY exhibition at Blenheim Palace in 2020 and will be published in the next annual hardback book. There will also be special prizes for first place including a champagne afternoon tea and a private tour.

PRIZES

First prize: 1 x prize copy of IGPOTY Book 14, Published in IGPOTY Book 14.

Your image goes on display at the IGPOTY Blenheim Palace exhibition and a signed individual certificate. Champagne afternoon tea for two, plus a private tour of Blenheim Palace and a Blenheim Palace hamper.

Second prize: 1 x prize copy of IGPOTY Book 14, published in IGPOTY Book 14.

Your image goes on display at the IGPOTY Blenheim Palace exhibition, plus a signed individual certificate.

Third prize: 1 x prize copy of IGPOTY Book 14, published in IGPOTY Book 14.

• *'The Bowl at Sunrise' by J.K. Putnam*

Your image goes on display at the IGPOTY Blenheim Palace exhibition, plus a signed individual certificate.

For more information go to https://igpoty.com/competitions/beautiful-blenheim-14.

TALICH STRING QUARTET

Royal Pump Rooms, The Parade, Leamington Spa, CV32 4AA, 29th November, 7.30pm

The Talich String Quartet, founded in 1964 by the present leader's father, the nephew of the great Czech conductor Václav Talich, has been recognized as one of the country's leading quartets. Jan Václav Kalivoda was born in Prague in 1801 and was an outstanding violinist, so expect virtuoso writing in this quartet, written in the mid 1830s, when his work was much admired by *Schumann*. *Dvorák* at his most lyrical completes the first half of the concert.

www.quatuortalich.com

OXFORD WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR CONCERT

St Mary's Church, Adderbury OX16 0AA, 30th November, 7.30pm

Most of us have heard of Welsh male voice choirs by repute, many of us have had the pleasure of hearing them first hand at a Welsh rugby match but now Adderbury is very pleased to welcome the renowned Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir to perform in St Mary's Church.

St. Mary's is a beautiful Church in the middle of the village and is noted for its wonderful acoustics, which will beautifully complement the magical sound of this renowned Welsh Male Voice Choir.

Tickets are £12 from Debby Dickinson (call 01295 810280 or email debbydickinson@gmail.com) or from Trish Fennell (call 01295 811059 or email trishfennell242@gmail.com).

WORDS: Chris Behan

• *This placard was pictured at Wormleighton*

• *This photo composition shows the effect of HS2 on The Carpenters Arms*

HS2 BE OR NOT TO BE?

THAT IS THE QUESTION...

Protests, demonstrations, public inquiries, questionable budgets, technical issues, overspending and late delivery have all been the characteristics of National transport infrastructure projects.

HS2 is no exception to this, so should we be surprised?

The Government isn't. It has thrown the future of HS2 into doubt by launching a high speed, weeks not months, review of the high speed railway project, with a 'go or no go' decision to be taken by the end of 2019.

The *Four Shires* have seen their fair share of major transport infrastructure projects over the past 150 years, all of which have had the above mentioned characteristics.

Two projects to prove the point. One in the 1880/90s and the other in the 1980/90s.

Do we never learn from history?

The London Extension of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, now better known locally as the Great Central Railway, although it ceased to exist as a company 96 years ago in 1923, had great ambitions in the late 19th century to construct a high speed railway line from Manchester and Sheffield to Paris via London and a Channel Tunnel. A Victorian HS1, 2 and 3 all rolled into one.

The proposed line through Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and a small parcel of Oxfordshire land near Mixbury was met with many objections, but unlike today, few from the general public, but more from the landowners and other railway companies. Unexpected, however, was the vociferous opposition of the artists of St John's Wood and the Marylebone Cricket Club, not so unexpected as the proposed line cut across their cricket ground, Lord's.

The artists' objections were that they saw the railway line, not only carrying passengers, but also "coal, manure, fish and other abominations."

The Great Central tried to buy the Lord's Cricket Ground for its railway line into Marylebone. After a huge rumpus, an agreement was reached whereby a 'cut and cover' tunnel was built to carry the line under the ground's nursery. Cricket lovers will know which end of Lord's Cricket Ground that is.

Nothing ever changes. The construction of the tunnel was not too dissimilar to the revised proposal, resulting from objections, for a 'cut and cover' tunnel to enable HS2 to bypass Greatworth in South Northants. Hopefully, for the residents of Greatworth, a case of, 'What the eye does not see, and the ear does not hear, the heart does not grieve'.

In Brackley, the Great Central planned to build a locomotive shed and workshops. The opposition to this was considerable and was led by the Squire of Turweston, John Locke Stratton, a major landowner, and Mayor of Brackley. The Railway Company decided not to fight the opposition and constructed their locomotive shed and workshops at Woodford Halse some 13 miles north of Brackley.

The cost of constructing this 19th century railway went way over budget and, due to financial constraints, the dream of reaching Paris was never fulfilled. It only reached Marylebone Station, for which, nowadays, customers of Chiltern Railways will be forever grateful.

Then there was the technical issue, the 233 metre long and 19 metre high Brackley Viaduct over the valley of the River Ouse. It was intended to build 22 arches, but this was not the outcome. Locals warned the contractor of unstable ground to no avail and consequently serious problems were encountered. The viaduct was almost complete when cracks appeared in two arches. The arches had to be removed and replaced with two steel girder spans, with a massive reinforcement of one of the piers. More cost overruns.

• *Author Chris Behan*

• *An old sign at Aston-le-Walls*

• *Brackley Station before renovation*

Paradoxically, when it was proposed to close the line in 1966 and ultimately demolish the disused viaduct in 1978 some of the descendants of the Victorian protesters protested against the closure and the demolition. C'est la vie!

Nearly one hundred years later the idea of a London-Birmingham motorway through Oxfordshire was officially proposed in the 1960s.

• *Brackley trains in the 50s*

The Department of Transport, no doubt, suspected that constructing a motorway through some of the finest Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire countryside might be met with some resistance, and it did.

The Department of Transport had good reason to be cautious. Local residents and Friends of the Earth opposed the Government's plan to route the M40 motorway across Otmoor, an important wildlife area. There was a long and protracted public inquiry which sat for 117 days in 1982 and 1983. The inquiry's inspector ruled in favour of the objectors with respect to Otmoor but approved the motorway in principle. The Department for Transport decided to ignore the decision and to proceed with its original route.

The protesters, however, refused to give up and formulated a new plan. They bought a meadow along the proposed route through Otmoor, which they named Alice's Field. Was it a reference to 'Alice in Wonderland'?

LOCALS WARNED THE CONTRACTOR OF UNSTABLE GROUND TO NO AVAIL AND CONSEQUENTLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS WERE ENCOUNTERED. THE VIADUCT WAS ALMOST COMPLETE WHEN CRACKS APPEARED IN TWO ARCHES

The meadow was then sold off in individual plots, over 3,500, at £2 a plot.

Buyers were then advised to sell the plots and delay construction of the motorway even further, by allowing protesters to appeal against the compulsory purchase of each of the field's 3,500 plots.

A second public inquiry was held in 1987 and 1988 and in March 1989 the route avoiding Otmoor was approved.

While we wait for a Government decision following the HS2 review, one thing is for sure. All these projects had another thing in common. The protesters never halted the construction, they were all completed, nevertheless, in a modified form which satisfied, to some extent, the wishes of those in favour and those against. In the 1890s, Woodford Halse, instead of Brackley, became the Crewe of Northamptonshire, sadly no more as a result of the Beeching Report (The Reshaping of British Railways) in 1963. Otmoor was protected in the 1990s and the RSPB were able to build a bird reserve on it.

As far as HS2 is concerned there is another characteristic which is unique to it as far as the *Four Shires* are concerned. Industry, commerce and residents of the area cannot use it. It's non stop from London to Birmingham. No doubt some economists will say that the *Four Shires* will benefit from the benefits the nation will accrue when it is completed.

However, do the past and present justifications, and the eventual outcome of these projects, tell us anything which we would be wise not to ignore? >>>

• *HS2 Ground Investigation - test boring site at Greatworth for a cut and cover tunnel*

• *The M40 sweeps down the Stokenchurch cutting to Milton Common*

• *HS2 works sign near Brackley*

The M40 eventually benefitted the area, bringing prosperity to Bicester and Banbury. The residents could use the motorway and have quick and easy access to London, the South East, Birmingham and the Midlands. In addition, some of the wealth generated in London moved north to the South Midlands. People could now live in this beautiful area and continue to work in London.

As for the Great Central Railway the same can hardly be said. At the end of the 19th century many people questioned the wisdom of building the line, but the Company defended it by arguing that growth in traffic would justify the new line. Sadly, it didn't.

Today many people, just like their Victorian ancestors, question the wisdom of building HS2, but the Department of Transport has defended it by arguing that it will 'deliver significant increases in capacity and connectivity and act as an engine for economic growth, and drive regeneration'.

Haven't we heard that before?

The ambitions of the Great Central Railway, in business terms were questionable, and it could be argued that the line should never have been built, but strangely, there is now a view that it should never have been closed. Why? Because it could have been the foundation for a new high speed railway line from London to the Midlands and the North, which, no doubt, some official would have called GC2. Too late now though. In the 50 years since the line was closed parts of it have been sold to farmers, industrial estates have been built along its length, housing estates

• *No to HS2 at Thorpe Mandeville at the Three Conies pub*

have been built and large sections of it in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire are now preservation railway lines.

On 23 February 2017 Royal Assent was granted for phase one of HS2, London to Birmingham. Since then, a range of preparatory works have commenced, including ground investigations and archaeological surveys. Locally these works have already been completed.

In September 2019, the new chairman of HS2 recommended the completion of phase one in a 'cost effective stage opening' starting in 2028. This would involve, initially, only running trains

• *Some people are pro (picture: Peter Jones)*

between Old Oak Common, near Acton in West London, and Birmingham.

The Old Oak Common station, already under construction, is an interchange station for HS2, the Paddington to Bristol, South Wales and the West mainline and the Heathrow Express. It is also proposed that at a later date in addition to the Chiltern Railways mainline travelling via South Ruislip to Marylebone, the mainly unused line from South Ruislip to Paddington is rebuilt as far as the HS2 Old Oak Common station. This would provide Chiltern Railways with another London terminal and enable its customers from the South and West Midlands to access the Heathrow Express without travelling via Central London.

• *Trains at Brackley Station*

We will soon know the views of Government on the HS2 project and all its phases beyond Birmingham. Is it, 'to be or not to be'?

One thing is certain, if the Government says 'no' to HS2, there will be another alternative transport solution proposed by the Department of Transport to 'deliver significant increases in capacity and connectivity and act as an engine for economic growth, and drive regeneration'. ◆

A HANDMADE CHRISTMAS

The idea of 'Handmade, not manufactured' is getting talked about this season.

Here are some key trends for this year's 'Handmade Christmas'.

Longer lasting decorations – make them yourself, use them again next time

What a great idea - making decorations and using them again next year!

The stress busting benefits of crafting are well understood, and you'll be making more sustainable decorations with that personal touch.

One of the most popular winter workshops at Vitreus Art is 'Fused Glass Tea light Holders and Christmas Stars'. The workshop details how to make a selection of tree decorations and tea light holders in a one day workshop in good time to enjoy at home, or give as gifts. Another option is to make a set of fused glass icicle tree decorations in an evening session.

Gifts you make yourself are more personal

You'll know your present will be appreciated more because you made it!

For example, we know that students at Vitreus Art often plan to make silver jewellery or cufflinks for others when they attend the precious metal clay silver jewellery workshops.

Of course you may have a dilemma when you see how lovely your finished work is – give it to someone, or keep it yourself – but you could always return and make more pieces to keep!

Giving a workshop experience as a gift for a crafty friend or loved one

If you know someone who would love to learn a new craft and make something for themselves, the best gift you can offer is an experience they'll enjoy (and love you for). Any of the one day or half day workshops at Vitreus Art can be given as a gift, either as an open voucher, or as a specific class on a date you can choose.

Winter scents and upcycled candles are on trend

Instead of buying mass produced candles for Christmas, wouldn't it be nicer to make your own scented candles with upcycled vintage teacups instead?

Vitreus Art will teach you how, and provide enough materials to make several teacup candles, plus tea lights or container candles with your choice of seasonal scents. This is a craft you can easily continue at home if you get the bug!

Decorating your home with lanterns and candleholders

Gloomy evenings can be made to feel more cheerful with your own handmade candleholders or coloured glass lanterns.

They're such lovely things to own, and the pleasure of making (and learning new craft skills) just enhances the glow you'll enjoy – literally and metaphorically.

You can make either on a one day workshop at Vitreus Art and you'll have a piece to treasure for years to come.

If you'd like to learn a new craft or make your own decorations, visit Vitreus Art in person or online at www.vitreus-art.co.uk and make Christmas 2019 the time you get into 'Handmade, not manufactured'. ◆

Vitreus Art: Wakefield Country Courtyard, off A5 near Potterspury.
Tel 01327 810320
hello@vitreus-art.co.uk
www.vitreus-art.co.uk

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Vitreus Art

Art & Craft Studio | Art Gallery

Christmas Craft Classes - Make your own Christmas decorations, Fused Glass Tealights, Scented Candles, Lanterns & Candleholders

Wakefield Country Courtyard A5 near Potterspury
Northants NN12 7FA | 01327 810320
www.vitreus-art.co.uk | hello@vitreus-art.co.uk

AROUND THE GALLERIES

FOUR SHIRES ART AND MUSEUMS

ST EDWARD'S SCHOOL: IN PROGRESS 3

The North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Oxford OX2 7JN, 13th - 26th November, 10am-4pm (above)

In Progress 3 celebrates the fantastic work from St Edward's pupils across all year groups, although primarily this is a platform for the Lower Sixth to showcase work produced on the Teddies Foundation Course, the exhibition will also present work from Year 9, GCSE and Upper Sixth students. The Teddies Foundation Course provides Lower Sixth 'A' Level and 'IB' pupils an opportunity to explore a range of media over a 16 week programme. Pupils are encouraged to choose a theme at the beginning of the year which their work centres on and teachers then introduce pupils to a new technique fortnightly. In Progress 3 showcases the work produced to date, approximately halfway through the course.

DIONNE FREEMAN – MOMENTS IN TIME

The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury OX16 2PA, until 2nd December (above right)

This exhibition focuses on the constant evolvement of mark making and the exploration of surfaces and space.

Observing and recording different spaces, their functions and how landscapes both interior and exterior get intertwined. Movement, trace memories and structures are re-emerging themes within the work. The paintings explore the need to make connections with the unfamiliar – using traces, fragments of places and spaces to rearrange these and formulate the familiar.

www.themillartscentre.co.uk

WINTER LIGHTS, CHRISTMAS EXHIBITION

Sarah Wiseman Gallery, South Parade, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7JL, 16th November - 31st December (below)

Visitors to this exhibition can expect wintry landscapes and atmospheric skies, which have inspired new collections of work by some of the gallery's leading lights. As always, the gallery has sourced the best artists and makers for a show that offers inspirational gift giving that will stand the test of time. For those in search of contemporary painting, there will be an array of striking works on show. These artists will include Dawn Stacey, who is new to the gallery. Her textile inspired paintings are layered with various techniques to achieve a beautiful softly lit atmosphere.

In addition, Bristol based painter Daniel Ablitt's atmospheric landscapes are influenced by travel experiences and childhood whose dreamlike qualities evoke the romance of wandering through the woods.

The light brushwork of Daniel's misty scenes seem to glow with diffused light, suggesting the magic of getting lost in nature.

There will also be delicate contemporary watercolours by Kate Evans which depict remote farm buildings, mountains and snow scenes.

The craft highlight of this year's Christmas exhibition is a new collection of work by gallery artist Janine Partington. Janine's new works capture the atmosphere of a walk through the British countryside, delicately carved into leather panels.

There are also works in glass, by recent Royal College of Art graduate Helen Slater, who specialises in using lenticular techniques.

www.wisegal.com

THE YOUNG TURNER: AMBITIONS IN ARCHITECTURE AND THE ART OF PERSPECTIVE

Banbury Museum, Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Banbury OX16 2PQ, until 12th January 2020 (above)

Following a successful campaign by the Ashmolean Museum to acquire JMW Turner's oil painting View of the High Street, Oxford, 1809-10, The Young Turner: Ambitions in Architecture and the Art of Perspective presents this masterful work, alongside some of Turner's first

commissions including drawings, paintings and engravings. Focussing on his work from the 1780s to the 1810s, the exhibition highlights his interest in architecture, the development of his skills in the art of perspective, and some of the sources of his inspiration.

The works on display are drawn primarily from collections in the Ashmolean Museum, and are complemented by loans from the Tate and private collections.

www.banburymuseum.org

ARIEL SCHLESINGER: WAYS TO SAY GOODBYE

Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park, Warwickshire CV35 9HZ, until September 2020 (top)

A newly commissioned sculpture in the park by Ariel Schlesinger reaches skywards, challenging our perception of the ordinary and highlighting the relationship between humans and nature. Cast in aluminium, with shattered mirrors nestled in its upper branches, Schlesinger's tree invites us to explore the unique and remarkable qualities in the everyday. Just as the original landscape architect, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, constructed a seemingly natural landscape, so Schlesinger's sculpture takes on a form that is at once both recognisable, and yet so much more.

www.comptonverney.org.uk

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY KATIE SURRIDGE, ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury HP20 2QP, 7th November, 11am-12noon (below)

Katie Surridge, mixed media artist, sculptor and metal worker, is the twelfth Muir Trust artist in residence at Bucks County Museum. She has been inspired by 45 archaeological items in the museum collections and has used them as a springboard for her work in new and interactive ways. Shortly before the opening of the residency exhibition, she will be discussing her work, previous projects, inspirations and the 2019 Muir Trust Residency. Questions from the audience are welcome. Booking required, please telephone 01296 331561 or send an email to museum@buckscountymuseum.org.

www.buckscountymuseum.org

CURIOUS CURES AND MARVELLOUS MEDICINES

Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Rugby CV21 3BZ, until March 2020 (above)

Explore medical instruments and packaging dating from late Victorians to mid 20th century in a new exhibition about health and medicine. The displays include objects donated from local surgeries and pharmacies in Rugby including: H Cook, Paddox Pharmacy and Fleet's Chemists. Enjoy the mini pharmacy in the Education Area. Put on a white coat and inspect the customer x-rays!

www.rugby.gov.uk/ragm

RADICAL DRAWING: WORKS FROM COVENTRY AND THE COURTAULD

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry CV1 5QP, until 19th January 2020 (below)

Radical Drawing is a unique opportunity to explore a group of remarkable drawings by artists who have pushed the boundaries of what it means to draw.

The exhibits are taken from the collections of The Courtauld Gallery in London, the University of Warwick and the Herbert's own collection, and include works by George Romney, Camille Pissarro, Pablo Picasso and Miriam de Búrca.

www.theherbert.org

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Pictures courtesy of Hansons

MECHANICAL TOYS

TOY FANATIC GATHERED ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST COLLECTIONS IN HIS HOUSE – AND NOW IT COULD SELL FOR £100,000

A mechanical toy fanatic whose home gradually turned into something akin to a museum of childhood is poised to sell his entire collection – and it could make £100,000.

• *Mike Stockwell with one of his many mechanical toys*

Over the course of 40 years, Mike Stockwell amassed thousands of vintage tinplate toys which were all carefully stored in display cabinets at his home near Chesterfield in Derbyshire.

"People used to ask to visit our house just to see them," said Mike, 69. "I suppose it was like going to a toy theatre.

"But these things are far more than toys. They're feats of engineering. Many are mechanical. They transcend from being playthings to movable works of art. Several are sophisticated pieces of equipment.

"I started collecting post-war tinplate automatons just after I married my wife Margaret in 1976 but I admit my hobby has gone beyond an obsession."

Around 1,000 items gathered by Mike in 277 lots are set to be sold at Derbyshire's Hansons Auctioneers. And such is the quality of the collection, which dates from the 1950s-70s, interest is growing among collectors around the world, particularly in America, Japan and China.

• *Bear The Magician: £12k-£15k*

Steve Fulford, toy valuer at Hansons, said: "It's the most staggering array of toys I have ever seen – and I used to run a toy museum. It has to be one of the best collections of its type in the world.

"When we walked into Mike's house to value the items, it was amazing to see room after room filled with boxed toys in display cabinets and on shelves. Some of the objects, now safely locked away in our safe, are incredibly valuable. For example, Snappy the Happy Bubble Blowing Dragon has a guide price of £20,000 to £30,000."

Mike, a retired toy shop owner, ecologist and space programme volunteer, said: "A robot recently sold in America for 86,000 dollars. Brand new in the UK in the 1950s it cost 49 shillings and 11 pence – that's the equivalent of £2.50 today. I don't think there's a bank in the world that could give you that kind of return.

"Tinplate toys are a tremendous investment now. Many were made in Germany and Japan after the Second World War. There was a need to get their economies back on track and they were allowed to make toys.

"During and just after the war it seemed as if everything was sepia, brown or green. In the 1950s these new toys emerged in bold and beautiful colours and they captured the new sense of optimism. They symbolised a bright and colourful future.

• *Rajah Rey The Indian Prince: £20k-£30k*

"I'm fascinated by the engineering excellence these automatons demonstrate. I loved to work out how each one worked.

"For example, there's a battery operated Japanese automaton, handmade in 1964, called McGregor. He's a Scotsman with a walking stick who sits in a chair. Switch him on and he gradually rises out of his chair, stands up and smokes his cigar.

• *Pleasant Kappa Funny River Monster: £500-£80*

• *Snappy the Happy Dragon: £20,000-£30,000*

TOY VALUATIONS

Enjoy free jewellery valuations with Kate Bliss on 14th November at St Francis of Assisi Church Hall, Kenilworth, CV8 1HL, 26th November at the Kings Head Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham, GL50 4LS and on 29th November at The Malt House, The Rookery, Alveston, Stratford CV37 7QP also with Adrian Rathbone, watches and Fine Art.

For toy valuations and advice please contact Steve Fulford at sfulford@hansonsauctioneers.co.uk

Free Home visits for large/bulky items and house clearance advice.

To find out more contact cjones@hansonsauctioneers.co.uk

"His movement is ingenious and seemingly impossible. It's on a par with the ability of a honeybee to fly horizontally from one flower to another. Bees shouldn't be able to do that. McGregor works thanks to a series of levers and counter levers, a motor, wires and batteries. There are no silicon chips.

• *Mike Stockwell's toys on display at his home*

"This wasn't a toy for children, it was a talking point to put on your home bar and impress your visitors. You can imagine Del Boy having one in TV's Only Fools and Horses.

"Japan had a love of western culture and there was often a connection to a movie or TV programme, from *Charlie Weaver* to *Robby the Robot, Howdy Doody* to *Star Wars*. One automaton in the sale, Rajah Rey The Indian Prince, is based on Richard Burton in 1955 film *The Rains of Ranchipur*."

Mike, who was born in Birmingham in 1950, thinks his fascination with mechanical toys was sparked by that fact that he didn't have many playthings as a child due to the expense.

• *Moon Patrol Vehicle: £1,200-£1,800*

• *Batman and The Joker: £3k-£6k*

"These Japanese and German toys were a dad's wages for the week. Ordinary families like mine couldn't afford them. I bought them at toy fairs and flea markets over many years, sometimes for pennies and now they're worth thousands.

"The time has come for me to sell my collection because I'm very concerned about climate change. Money raised from the auction will be used to fund eco-conservation projects. I have three grandchildren and I want them to a have a future." ◆

HANSONS
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Free Jewellery & Silver with **Kate Bliss**; Chinese with **Charles Hanson**; Painting Restoration & Antiques Valuation Day

KENILWORTH: 14 November 10am - 4pm
at St Francis of Assisi Church Hall, CV8 1HL

Free Jewellery, Silver & Antiques Valuation Day with **Kate Bliss**

BISHOPS CLEEVE: 26 November 11am - 4pm
at The Kings Head, GL52 8LU

ALVESTON: 29 November 12.30pm - 4.30pm
at The Malt House, CV37 7QP

The Auction Centre, Heage Lane, Etwall
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SHOPPING FOR THE TERRIFIED

It is the time of year when thousands of people begin to flock to their local towns, cities and festive markets to start their Christmas shopping.

Yes I mentioned it, the 'C' word, in November, ***writes Cathy Black***.

Like it or not, the festive music has already started and the huge displays of Christmas stock that have been teasing us for months have finally taken centre stage.

Now, I would not describe myself as a 'Bah Humbug' sort of person. In fact, I particularly enjoy the chance to buy the children a few extra special treats at this time of year. The only trouble is I really do not enjoy shopping of any sort!

Shopping to me is always a daunting task. I am forever second guessing everything I consider buying in case the recipient won't like or even want it. I am also one of those people always looking for the best deal. The only trouble is that, more often than not, the first thing I see would be the best deal but, by the time I have realised this, it is no longer available!

On and on like this it goes... Eventually after much pulling of teeth and agonising the gift shopping gets done but never without rather a lot of mental turmoil.

There must be an easier way?!

I long for the happy glow that comes from shopping that several of my work colleagues experience whenever they have shopping bags in their hands.

However, I have my own methods of combat! There are lists and lots of them. There's plenty of research and a budget is drawn up so that we aren't broke come January 1st!

I am very much an advocate of shopping locally where possible and, with so many great shopping destinations in and around the *Four Shires*, there really are endless choices.

Whether you are looking for the latest electronic devices, clothing, entertainment, toys or something quirky and unusual it is all available locally.

But how do you take the 'terrified' out of your shopping experience?

This is the question I have been asking myself all year and now I wish to share some tips and tricks I have disovered along the way.

Decide what your budget is: I always set a budget before I start my shopping. Then I break this down into two sections: 'our children' and 'family and friends'. This can be the most difficult aspect of all but it is important to be clear about your budget and how much you can afford to spend, not only on each present but in total too. The two lists mean that I can clearly see what our proposed overall spend will be. Christmas is one of those times where it is very easy to feel pressurised into spending too much, but remember that Christmas is about spending *time* with people not spending *money* on them.

List, list and list again: Listing is an organisational pastime shared by both myself and my husband! Make a list of what you're planning to buy for everyone and stick to it. To make the most of your lists make sure you include stocking fillers as well as main presents. It is amazing how all those little bits and pieces can quickly add up.

Research prices before you go: I am a serious advocate of supporting local shops, but if you are on a tighter budget (as I shall be) it is important to do a little research on prices, particularly for bigger ticket items, before you step foot in the shops. It makes sense to at least have an idea of what the big retailers are offering and many of them will offer price matching too - so don't forget to ask.

If you're shopping for gadgets, make sure you are comparing like for like regarding technical specification and check what extras or bundles are available.

You might also want to check any consumer reviews. Whilst you need to be able to read between the lines when looking at reviews, you will generally get a sense of whether a product is truly worth the money.

Cash vs credit: Stick to your budget and know how much you can realistically afford to spend. If you choose to spend on your credit cards, as many do for the added protection it offers, particularly on more expensive items, make sure you'll be able to make the necessary repayments without incurring hefty interest charges. It is worth factoring in any added interest when researching prices and setting your budget in the first place. Better still, pay it off straight away. I much prefer to spend only the money that I actually have so that I won't be caught out in the New Year.

EVENTUALLY, AFTER MUCH PULLING OF TEETH, THE CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOPPING GETS DONE, BUT NEVER WITHOUT RATHER A LOT OF MENTAL TURMOIL

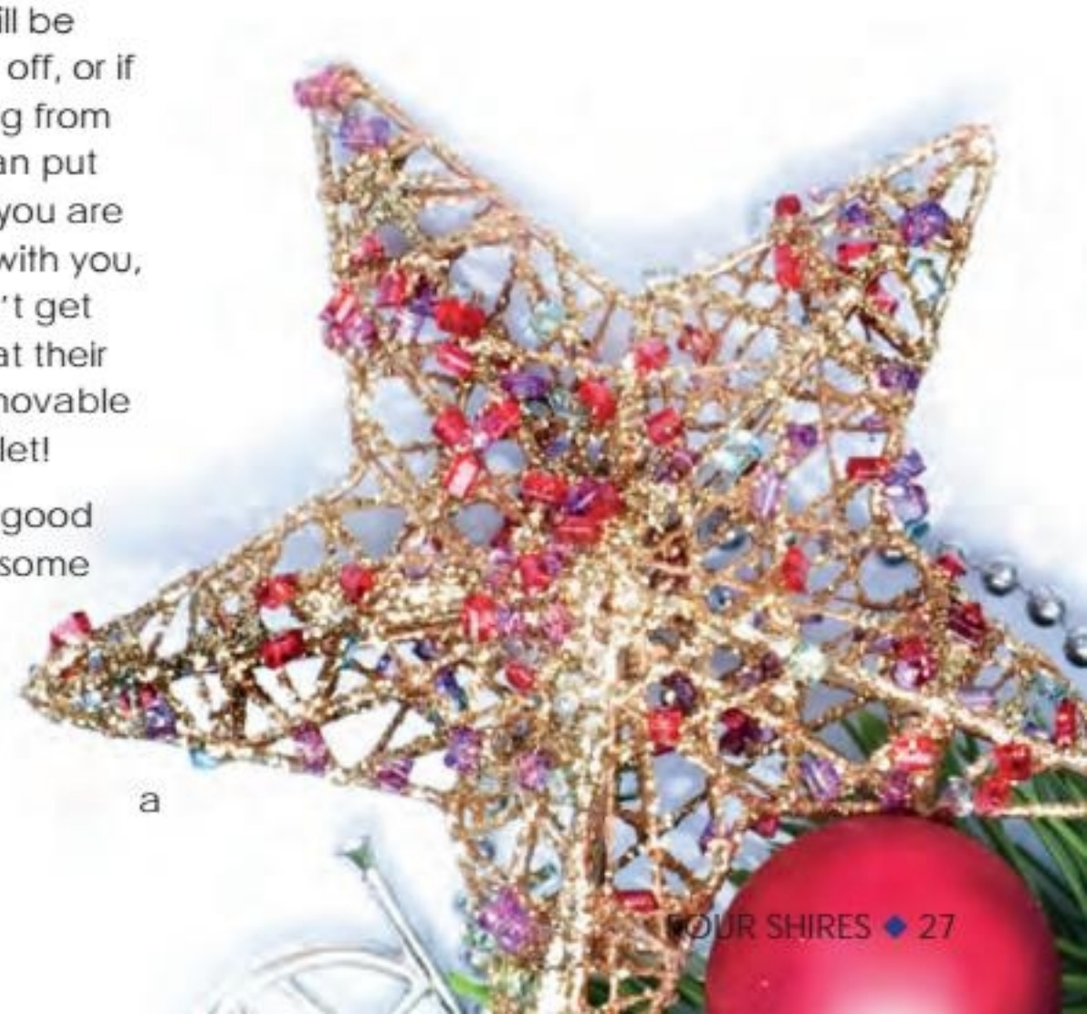
Plan your shopping route: Once you know what you want to buy and where the best deals are likely to be, it's easier to plan your route. Make allowances for the day and time you go shopping. If you hate crowds, first thing on a Sunday morning will be a nicer experience than mid-afternoon on a Saturday! Although shopping at anytime near Christmas is likely to be very busy.

Dress appropriately: This may seem like an odd point to make, but the more comfortable you are wandering around town the easier you will find your shopping trip. Wear comfortable shoes and clothes in layers. This means if you get a little hot and flustered you will be able to take a layer off, or if you get chilly moving from shop to shop you can put another layer on. If you are taking the children with you, make sure they don't get overheated and that their clothing is easily removable for dashes to the toilet!

Take a break: It is a good idea to schedule in some breaks. Whether for lunch or just a snack and a warm drink, it is important to take a breather. This time will offer you the chance to evaluate what you have already purchased and will reinvigorate you for the remainder of your shopping trip.

Keep receipts: Why not start a folder specially for Christmas present receipts? Simply pop them straight in when you get home and you'll know where to find them should anything need to be taken back after Christmas. Lots of retailers will also be happy to email you your receipt to save on all those annoying bits of paper. Remember to also ask for gift receipts (these don't show the price) that you can pop in with your gifts just in case something needs to be taken back by the recipient.

I am not saying that these tips will completely alleviate the stress and potential terror from your shopping trips but hopefully, with a little pre-planning and budget awareness, you will soon be on your way to feeling that happy, Christmas shopping glow. ◆



WEDDING HEAVEN

AT MISSENDEN ABBEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

A 12th Century former medieval abbey, set within 10 acres of beautiful grounds in the heart of the Chilterns, Missenden Abbey blends a historic building with a purpose built conference and training facility, named the Coach House.

When you are looking for a stunning backdrop for your wedding celebrations, Missenden Abbey never fails to impress; with high vaulted ceilings, stained glass windows and beautifully dressed marquee, it is the perfect wedding venue partner to ensure you have the most amazing and unforgettable day. Packages are available throughout the year as well as a bespoke service to suit all budgets.

If you are looking for a training venue, meeting space or strategy away day, Missenden Abbey has 22 meeting rooms to hire, ranging from small one to one interview rooms to a 100 seat theatre style conference room. With their learning environment, sumptuous cuisine and dedicated team the pressure is taken out of the planning so that you and your colleagues get the most out of your stay. Day Delegate and Residential packages are on offer to ensure simple pricing with no hidden costs. Why not get the team together for some teambuilding or simply a break from the office.

Missenden Abbey also hosts a number of public events throughout the year, ranging from Craft Fairs, Weddings Fairs, Murder Mystery Nights, Christmas Parties and an extravagant New Year's Eve party.

The Carrington Suite is our alternative private party venue, with access to a large function room, adjoining bar lounge and a walled garden area catering for large events to intimate family gatherings.

When you visit Missenden Abbey, make sure you try the delicious afternoon teas with a variety of speciality tea, fresh sandwiches, petit fours and freshly baked scones. "We pride ourselves on our passion for constant development, to keep our food fresh and exciting, to exceed our client's expectations and to challenge our team". The food served is locally grown and sourced, supporting our community. This includes local butchers, dairies and the Missenden Walled Garden Charity, which resides within the grounds, providing the kitchens with fresh herbs, fruit and vegetables.

If you are visiting Missenden Abbey for a wedding, on business or just fancy a weekend getaway, the rooms are perfect for a great night's sleep in the peaceful town of Great Missenden. You can also take advantage of the location to explore the idyllic Chiltern Hills. Missenden Abbey offers 57 ensuite bedrooms and breakfast is included with the accommodation packages, Enjoy a full English breakfast or go continental with a variety of pastries, bagels and fruit. In the evenings you can relax in the Cromwell bar and try a dish from the tasty bar menu.

Missenden Abbey is located in the picturesque village of Great Missenden, which benefits from a train station on the Chiltern line that runs directly to London Marylebone.

The Abbey is also a 30 minute drive from Heathrow Airport and is easily accessible from the M40, M4 and M25, with 100 free car parking spaces. ◆

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Christmas
at Missenden Abbey

Christmas at Missenden Abbey is an enchanting time; from the glistening Christmas trees to the abundance of decorations, seasonal food and entertainment. Choosing to celebrate with us will ensure your festive season gets off to a great start!

Party Nights at the Abbey

Our party nights begin at 7.30pm with a glass of sparkling wine before heading in for a delicious three course meal. After dinner, our DJ and disco will have you up on the dance floor dancing the night away.
Price per person:*
• Sunday - Wednesday: £32 per person
• Thursday: £38 per person
• Friday & Saturday: Sold Out
* Special Offer - When booking, quote 'Four Shires' to receive 10% off your party night (New bookings only)

Seasonal Lunch

Our Seasonal Lunch includes a non-alcoholic** cocktail and our three course Christmas menu.
Price per person: £29.00
(**upgrade your non-alcoholic to a glass of Prosecco for £3 per person)

Festive Afternoon Tea

Meet up with family and friends and enjoy a delicious afternoon tea; a great British tradition.
Price per person: £21.00

Party Nights in the Carrington

The Carrington Suite is the perfect function area for informal private parties with a minimum number of 40 guests and a maximum of 100 guests.
Available for private Christmas parties on Friday and Saturday nights in December only.
Enjoy a drink on arrival, our Festive Finger Buffet, private bar, DJ and disco all for £19.99 per person!

Christmas Craft Market

Sunday 1st December | 11am - 4pm

Our famous Christmas Craft market will be returning this year, featuring craft stalls, festive food and drink, children's activities and even Santa himself may drop by!

Head to our website for more info, or contact our Christmas co-ordinators on 01494 866811.

MISSENDEN ABBEY

London Road
Great Missenden
Bucks HP16 0BD

t: 01494 866811
w: www.missendenabbey.co.uk
e: sales@missendenabbey.ltd.uk

LIMITED EDITION PRINTS

CELEBRATE SIR STIRLING MOSS AND JAGUAR

To celebrate the 90th birthday of Sir Stirling Moss, local company BRG Multimedia has published a tribute limited edition of three prints commemorating key moments in his early career and his links with Jaguar – another British motor racing legend and a marque with a strong association to our *Four Shires*.

The first of the three subjects is Sir Stirling's first international sports car win, which he achieved in a Jaguar XK120 in the 1950 TT at Dundrod. Next is his drive in a C-Type Jaguar sports racer in the 1952 Monaco Grand Prix. That was the only year that the race was for sports cars. Finally, there is an evocative print to recall the memories of his popular Silverstone saloon car performances in a Jaguar Mk 7, This was a luxury model more suited to chauffeuring dignitaries around than racing at more than 100mph on a track!

1950 DUNDROD TT

(Top right)

Sir Stirling had his first drive in a Jaguar on 16th September 1950 on the rain lashed roads of the Dundrod race circuit in Northern Ireland. Denied a factory drive because of his youth, the 20 year old Moss drove a motoring journalist's personal XK120 road car and won his first major international sports car race, the RAC Tourist Trophy. It was the day before Stirling's 21st birthday and the win led to a contract with the factory Jaguar team. A year later, he repeated the TT win for Jaguar in a C-Type sports racer.

1952 MONACO GRAND PRIX

(Below right)

On 2nd June 1952, the lack of a current and credible Formula One entry meant that for the first and only time in its history the Monaco Grand Prix was run for sports cars. By mid race Stirling Moss was so far ahead in the Jaguar C-Type that he was already lapping cars and on the way to what seemed a certain win. However, another car that he was about to lap had blown its engine and dumped oil all across the track further round the circuit. A multi car pile up ensued, unfortunately including and eliminating Stirling.

1953 SILVERSTONE SALOON CAR RACE

(Below)

On 9th May 1953 at Silverstone, for the second year in succession Stirling Moss was on his way to winning the International Production Touring Car Race in the mighty Jaguar Mk 7 luxury saloon. He drove the same car (LWK343) each time and even once again in 1954. His chance of a hat trick of wins that year disappeared when the starter motor jammed at the Le Mans type start and he had to leap out and rock the car in gear to free it. Once on the move, he set fastest lap and finished in third place!

The originals were the work of Peter Hearsey, one of Britain's foremost automotive artists and each print in the tribute edition is limited to 100 examples. Each 594 x 420mm print is hand made to order by a local printer specialising in fine arts publishing, They are printed on 210gsm Albrecht Durer art paper by the Giclee process that allows the best possible colour replication of the original painting.

Each print is priced at £75 and will be sequentially numbered by the publishers as well as embossed with the company seal of authentication.

Further details and information on the ordering procedures are available from www.brgmutimedia.com. ◆

JUST FOR GIRLS

CHRISTMAS GIFTS SHE'LL REALLY LOVE YOU FOR

Whether you're shopping for your wife, girlfriend, mother, daughter or friend, we understand that it's not always **a breeze. Some people do find choosing a gift pretty tricky, so we have some special gift ideas for all the** ladies you adore...

Silk scarves are always a winner. Girls love them and there's a super selection at Barn Farm Plants, £14.95 each

Keep her hands toasty warm this winter with these King Louie retro gloves or some ethically produced jewellery from Nellie and Dove

You won't go far wrong with these Shaun Leane Yellow Gold Vermeil Talon Earrings, £225, from Michael Jones Jewellers. After all, Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, loves hers!

NELLIE & DOVE & MR

ladieswear | menswear | jewellery | gifts | home

pop in...we're opposite Deddington Church, with free parking and 1000 sq. ft. of retail heaven :) also online nellieanddove.com

Bag a beauty... Girls can never have too many handbags, believe me! Ladies like to have different bags for different events and a range of colours to accommodate every outfit. They know it's excessive, but they don't care. So add to her collection this Christmas with a funky hide bag from Nellie & Dove (below) or a smart black tote, £60 from Stalls Lifestyle (right)

All that glistens... is a great choice! Make her dressing table sparkle with a beautiful large jewellery box, £28.99, or a small one, £17.25, both from Farnborough Garden Centre

Money talks, so give her something to keep it in! Purses from Doodledash

She'll shimmer happily all through Christmas wearing this glorious green Empire pendant from Nellie & Dove

A familiar face in the autumn woodland, this squirrel looks for a place to hide his prized acorn! Alex Monroe Squirrel and Acorn Necklace £165 from Michael Jones Jeweller

Once the Christmas decs are up, there's nothing nicer than coming home to those festive aromas. A Heyland and Whittle Christmas Fragrance will be perfect: Diffusers £19.99; Candles in a tin £7.99, from Barn Farm Plants

Have a rummage in her wardrobe to find her dress size, then head off to Roman for this gorgeously glam number, £80

It's a miracle... Heels you can walk in all day! Off The Ground Heels in royal blue suede, heel height 60mm. See page 90

Bath Revive by MAKE is a treat for your bathing beauties

Hands and feet will love these softening products by MAKE, all at Nellie and Dove

STOCKISTS: Barn Farm Plants, Upper Wardington, Banbury OX17 1SN, 01295 758080, www.barnfarmplants.co.uk
Nellie and Dove, Market Place, Deddington OX15 0SE, 01869 336972, www.nellieanddove.com
Michael Jones Jeweller, 79-80 High Street, Banbury OX16 5JG, 01295 263540, www.michaeljonesjeweller.co.uk/banbury-store
Farnborough Garden Centre, Southam Road, Farnborough, Banbury OX17 1EL, 01295 690479, www.farnboroughgardencentre.co.uk
Stalls Lifestyle, Preston-on-Stour, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 8DZ, 01789 450555, www.stallslifestyle.co.uk
Doodledash Interiors, 3 Parsons Street, Banbury OX165LW, 07527 229739, www.doodledash.co.uk
Roman, Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Banbury OX16 5UN, 01295 256296, www.castlequay.co.uk

Stylish glasses will always be pleasing for that first drink after a hard day's work. Tumbler with slate coaster £20 each, or a set of 4 Glass Tumblers, £40 from Barn Farm Plants

MEN ONLY

HELPING YOU SUCCEED AT THE HARDEST CHRISTMAS JOB OF ALL!

Let's face it, if you ask a man what he'd like most as a gift, you'll get one of two answers: "nothing" or "I don't know". So if they don't want anything or have no idea what they might want, where does that leave the keen shopper? Somewhere without a paddle I suspect! To avoid unecessary stress this Christmas, take a few of our festive tips and get them something they won't have thought about. They are all on these pages. You need go no further!

Most men won't admit to wanting to look good, but they do. They want fashionable clothing that makes them feel great but without looking like they are trying too hard. So add to their wardrobes this Christmas: The Holmes signature boots, House of Cavali, in tan or brown (top), are £80 from Union

For smart shoes (far left), try Henrys of Banbury. Henrys also stocks some of the most beautiful shirts we've ever seen (above left), along with the softest knitwear (below left).

And if you buy a shirt with a cufflink sleeve, wander round the corner to Michael Jones Jeweller for the fabulous Deakin & Francis Sterling Silver Red Racing Car Cufflinks, £315, as featured in The Sunday Times Style Guide

If you have a party to go to over Christmas or new year – or even if you don't! – consider investing in a dapper new jacket or suit. The Albert grey suit (left), by House of Cavani, is available as a blazer, two piece or three piece from Union

Winter is coming and you won't want him getting cold! So treat him to a smart, warm coat, like this Danilo overcoat in navy check, £139 from Union

Men should have nice feet, whatever anyone says! Give them the Farmers range foot cream from Nellie and Dove. We promise they will thank you!

If your man has a man shed, or another room or space that he calls his own, make sure he's back in time for dinner! Gift him this Mechanical Clock, £120, from Farnborough Garden Centre

T-shirts are not just for summer. Gentlemen wear these all year round and this Cycling T-shirt from Nellie and Dove is great for a bike enthusiast

He will adore a Montblanc Meisterstück Le Petit Prince Classique Ballpoint Pen, £385, Michael Jones Jewellers

STOCKISTS: Henrys of Banbury, 52 High Street, Banbury, 01295 251044, www.henrysofbanbury.com
Union Menswear, 19a Parson's Street Banbury OX16 5LY, 01295 278085,www.unionmenswear.co.uk
Barn Farm Plants, Upper Wardington, Banbury OX17 1SN, 01295 758080, www.barnfarmplants.co.uk
Nellie and Dove, Market Place, Deddington OX15 0SE, 01869 336972, www.nellieanddove.com
Michael Jones Jeweller, 79-80 High Street, Banbury OX16 5JG, 01295 263540, www.michaeljonesjeweller.co.uk/banbury-store
Farnborough Garden Centre, Southam Road, Farnborough, Banbury OX17 1EL, 01295 690479, www.farnboroughgardencentre.co.uk

CRAFTY CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

ALL WRAPPED UP AT BLENHEIM PALACE

Living Crafts for Christmas returns to the majestic setting of Blenheim Palace from Thursday 14th to Sunday 17th November.

150 designer/makers will be in attendance to showcase the very best of British contemporary craft. This is an indulgent day out, packed with seasonal charm and exquisite gift ideas not found on the High Street. Added to this will be plenty of Christmas entertainment which is guaranteed to put you in the festive spirit!

Start ticking off your Christmas present list with stylish, original handmade gifts for every taste and budget with carefully vetted, high quality craft together with artisan food and drink from specialist makers. Living Crafts for Christmas has a well earned reputation for exceptional craftsmanship and design which is reflected in the huge selection of stylish gifts on offer.

As the aroma of roasting chestnuts and winter spices fill the air, browse the pavilions at Flagstaff and choose from studio glass, soaps, fashions, puzzles, photography, millinery, children's clothes, ceramics, textiles, toys, sculpture and so many more. Luxurious wreaths, garlands, cards, candles, decorations and handcrafted baubles are perfect for seasonal style while jewellery stands will be brimming with exquisite contemporary designs in gold and silver – the ideal surprise present!

Further event information and ticket purchase is available at livingcrafts.co.uk ◆

ADVERTISING FEATURE

DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN STYLE !

Living Crafts for Christmas

Choose perfect presents from around 150 designer-makers selling the best of British contemporary craft. A day packed with seasonal charm, entertainment & festive treats!

Thursday 14 - Sunday 17 November

BLENHEIM PALACE

Discounted advance tickets via website • Open 10:00am - 5:30pm • LivingCraftsUK

www.livingcrafts.co.uk

Cuddly toys are welcome by all children! There's a huge selection at Farnborough Garden Centre: Rabbit £24, Dog £47, Wild Dog £42

Always a favourite and this one's a delight, Paddington Bear from Marks and Spencer

Slime... always a hit with the kids! Busterz by Ryans World, from Claires Accessories. Nice!

KIDDIWINKS

CHILDREN ARE WHO CHRISTMAS IS REALLY FOR

The one thing that's so adorable about Christmas is how excited and happy they look on Christmas morning. They don't care how much you've spent and the wrapping paper is as exciting as what's inside. Enjoy every moment!

Education can be fun with the Magic Spelling game from The Entertainer. Who can spell the quickest? You or your children?

Keep them occupied while you prepare the Christmas feast. Playmobil Jigsaw Box For Children, from Farols

Bakers beware. Here's a bit of fun and mess! Line the table with old newspaper and present a Play Doh kitchen creater mixer, from Debenhams

Get their little brains working overtime. They'll be entranced for hours with this Galt Rainbow lab from Waterstones

The perfect ride-on for a little one is this Linde Pedal Forklift truck from Farols

STOCKISTS: Farol, Rycote Lane Farm, Milton Common, Thame OX9 2NZ, 01844 278843, www.farol.co.uk
Farnborough Garden Centre, Southam Road, Farnborough, Banbury OX17 1EL, 01295 690479, www.farnboroughgardencentre.co.uk
Marks and Spencer, Waterstones, Debenhams, Claires Accessories: all at Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Banbury OX16 5UN, 01295 256296, www.castlequay.co.uk

Homey gifts go down a treat and if they look good as well as being useful, even better! Beautifully nestled condiment pots, £24.95 from Stalls Lifestyle, the Himalayan rock salt & grater and the fun stacking fish glasses are from Nellie and Dove. And for deep sea lovers, the Whale Pot & Whale Jug are £17.25 each from Farnborough Garden Centre

SHAKE UP YOUR SHOPPING

WHOEVER YOU NEED TO BUY FOR YOU'LL FIND SOME TIPS HERE

Wondering what to buy your bestie for Christmas? Have you any idea what to get for your family? Having organised your husband, wife and children, shopping for family and friends can often take a bit of a back seat, but surely, they deserve something equally as fabulous? Well, we've got a wonderful array of Christmas gifts here, so you can spoil your mum, dad, brother, sister and BFF's to something special this festive season!

Gorgeous home accessories can be found at Doodledash, Banbury

These chopping boards from Barn Farm Plants are an absolute delight! Practical as well as great to look at, you'll want these on display, £36 each

A Christmas hottie will keep you lovely and warm - this one's from Primark

We don't know any men who buy their own socks! These are a bit 'novelty', but they'll still wear them and they're a great 'filler'. £3 a pair from M&Co

Moroccan Flower tooth picks are pehaps an unusual gift, but who says a gift always has to be traditional? Find these at Nellie & Dove

Smell divine with some Thomas Clipper Cologne from Nellie & Dove

Scented candles are a simply wonderful treat. This Voyage Candle and Diffuser Collection is from Oliver Bonas. Prices range from £25-£29.50 for the candles and £10 for the Candle Snuffer

STOCKISTS: Barn Farm Plants, Upper Wardington, Banbury OX17 1SN, 01295 758080, www.barnfarmplants.co.uk
Nellie and Dove, Market Place, Deddington OX15 0SE, 01869 336972, www.nellieanddove.com
Farnborough Garden Centre, Southam Road, Farnborough, Banbury OX17 1EL, 01295 690479, www.farnboroughgardencentre.co.uk
Stalls Lifestyle, Preston-on-Stour, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 8DZ, 01789 450555, www.stallslifestyle.co.uk
Doodledash Interiors, 3 Parsons Street, Banbury OX165LW, 07527 229739, www.doodledash.co.uk
M&Co stores are on many high streets. Oliver Bonas can be found online and in bigger towns

Michael Jones Jeweller

100 YEARS

PORTFOLIO®

OF FINE DIAMONDS

THE ONE

AND ONLY AT
MICHAELJONESJEWELLER.CO.UK

LUXURY LIFESTYLE

FOR A VERY MERRY, QUIRKY CHRISTMAS

• *Sea Salt & Oakmoss Diffuser, £24.95*

• *Reindeer, from £5.95*

• *Bunny Cushions, £19.95*

Stalls Lifestyle is located within the beautiful historic deer park of Alscot Estate which lies to the edge of Preston-on-Stour, three miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon. The business has become a key destination for shoppers and for those wanting to meet, chat, drink great coffee, and sort their Christmas gifts, tree and decorations.

A familiar sight driving along the Shipston Road into Stratford is Stalls distinctive large wooden Christmas tree indicating that trees are available from the timber yard, which is run by Kathryn's partner Nigel. They sell truly gorgeous luxury Nordmann fir trees in the yard from the first week in December – they are quality trees from Scotland ranging in height from 4ft to 12ft, and cost from £25 to over £100. Kathryn says she makes sure that customers feel festive from the moment they step into Stalls.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Stalls
LIFESTYLE

EVERYTHING FOR THE HOME

• Stunning Interiors • Fashion Accessories
• Superb Coffee and Tea • Delicious Cakes

Preston Lane, Preston-on-Stour, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 8DZ
Website: www.stallslifestyle.co.uk
Telephone: 01789 450555 E-mail: info@stallslifestyle.co.uk

"We put the Christmas music on in the yard at weekends and give out mulled wine which makes it a great festive atmosphere. Then of course customers can pop in and buy some new decorations for their tree. Our contemporary decorations offer something a bit different, and they are very popular."

When it comes to present buying, even the most tricky of loved ones can be catered for at Stalls. As well as a huge array of tempting interior design items – including everything from furniture to mirrors, they have some brilliant and unusual gifts.

"We try to stock items you won't see on the high street in Stratford," explains Kathryn. "I try and be different and find quirky things; people will often say 'ooh I haven't seen this before', they come to us to buy unique gifts. We sell all sorts: furniture, kitchen accessories, crockery, glassware, scarves and we have many to choose from – handbags, fashion, jewellery, candles, gifts for men, lamps – the list goes on.

"Cushions are always popular, we have some lovely animal ones. We can't stock enough of them, they fly out of the door.

• *Driftwood Lamp' £275 (left) and Forest Lanterns, from £34.95 (above)*

"We also have an extensive British made sofa collection, handmade to order. We are holding a sofa CLEARANCE (ex demo) sale soon. A brand new sofa for Christmas would make the perfect present. The date is to be confirmed so please contact us for more information."

Once you've shopped until you've dropped, you can visit the on site coffee shop, with its lovely views of the deer park and Alscot Estate. They serve divine coffee, cakes and light lunches. The coffee shop goes festive too and will soon be serving delicious mince pies and Stollen cake. ◆

Call 01789 450555 or visit www.stallslifestyle.co.uk

• *Football Doorstop, £23.95; Rugby Ball Doorstop, £22.95*

• *Teddy Doorstop, £23.95*

• *Vine Leaf Bowl, £19.95 (above) and Tealight Holder, £21.95 (above right)*

ADVERTISING FEATURE

HANDMADE BESPOKE JEWELLERY

WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH

Continuing the family business established in 1922, Clarinda Clark and her team at Clarks in Towcester specialise in offering quality handmade bespoke jewellery.

The bijou jewellers based in the Sponne Shopping Centre in the Northamptonshire town, is celebrating its 22nd birthday although its roots can be traced back to Edwardian London; Clarinda's grandfather setting up business there in the 1920s.

Whilst the premises have changed during that time, the Clarks commitment to personal service has never wavered.

"We really are known for our exemplary customer service," said Samantha Coutts, one of the team at Clarks.

"We specialise in creating bespoke jewellery and the very nature of this process means that we have to work very closely with our customers. This is a relationship that just wouldn't work without the personal touch.

• *Ted Clark*

"A large part of the design process we specialise in is refurbishing and remodelling jewellery. A customer might bring us a cherished heirloom piece – we can offer expert guidance on how to proceed."

As well as working with heirloom pieces, Clarks offer a 'Cad Cam'

• ***Solid silver flower necklace***

ADVERTISING FEATURE

CLARKS JEWELLERS
Est. 1945
Telephone 01327·353624

We can design the engagement ring and wedding band of your dreams
with over 20 years experience designing handmade bespoke jewellery.
Choose your metal, choose your diamond or your precious gemstone.

01327 353624
10 Sponne House, The Shopping Centre, Watling Street, Towcester NN12 6BY
Clarkes Jewellers
@clarksjewellers

• *18ct white gold ring with oval cut tanzanite and diamond shoulder*

three dimensional design process that means jewellery can be created from a customer's design.

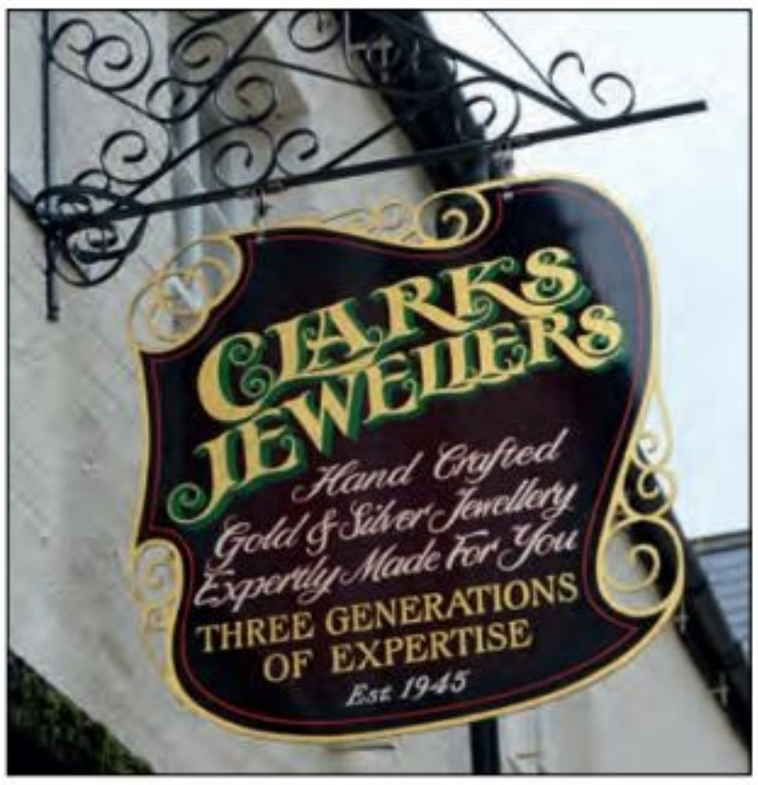
"We can work from a customer's drawing. Using the 'Cad Cam' system we can create a faithful reproduction.

Clarks also specialise in repairing existing jewellery and watches. Customers' testimonials vouch for how good the service is that they offer.

As well as servicing watches, Clarks have their very own 'Clarks of Towcester' range of watches. Slimmer than the chunkier models, the watches are far more comfortable to wear.

Clarinda Clark is very proud of the jewellery making heritage she is part of and the following legend is printed in the shop. ◆

The Clark Legacy
We have been a family business for three generations.
We offer a quality service along with expertise built up over the years.
Precious gems set rings designed in store and custom made at our Hatton Garden shop by our Master Jeweller Mr J M Clark.
Clarinda Clark has incorporated the knowledge of jewellery making from previous generations



• *18ct platinum ring with diamond solitaire*

ABOUT TOWCESTER

The vibrant market town of Towcester is situated within easy distance of Milton Keynes, Stoke Bruerne, Stowe House & Gardens and Silverstone Circuit surrounded by beautiful South Northamptonshire countryside. A day out in Towcester has something of interest for everyone whether it's shopping, eating out or a visit to the museum or brewery.

Every year there are a number of community events including the popular May Day Fayre, Midsummer Music and Christmas Market. A Farmers Market is held every second Friday of the month in Richmond Road Car Park between 9am and 1pm. An Antiques and Bric-a-Brac Market is held at the Town Hall every Friday.

• *18ct white gold wedding band and engagement ring with diamonds*

THE CLARK LEGACY

Three generations of jewellers for over 100 years making magnificent and unique handcrafted jewellery.

Jean Rene Clark was the first jeweller in the family, working from 1922 to 1969. Mr Jean was a skilled natural hand engraver. He passed his knowledge on to this son, Joseph Milsted Clark.

Joseph Milsted (Ted) Clark started in business in 1953 in Hatton Garden in London and is still working for Clarks. During that time in London, his daughter, Clarinda, learned the profession and has now been established in Towcester for the past 22 years.

Clarinda has added to the skill set she learned from her father by studying as an art student as well learning creative jewellery design.

'Three generations of customer service and customer's satisfaction in jewellery making.'

• *9ct gold earrings with tanzanite*

ADVERTISING FEATURE

VERY MERRY MARKETS

AND DAZZLING LIGHTS

GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AND CRAFT FAIR

Corn Exchange, High Street, Witney OX28 6AB, 2nd November, 10am-4pm

This event has been held in Witney for over 25 years. There will be plenty of local crafters and producers bringing you some great gift options for the upcoming festive season.

THE VILLAGE MAKER'S MARKET

Tylers Green Village Hall, Buckinghamshire HP10 8LN, 9th November, 12-4pm

There will be over 35 stalls all selling handmade, local, high quality artisan products. These include jewellery, home décor, Christmas decorations, beauty products, eco products, food, drink and much more besides.

THE FESTIVE GIFT FAIR

NEC Birmingham B40 1NT, 14th – 17th November

This dynamic Christmas Fair is a great place to go to start your festivities! There are thousands of unusual gifts, stocking fillers, decorations, artisan food and drink at prices worth celebrating!

CHRISTMAS LIGHT FESTIVAL

The Story Museum, 42 Pembroke Street, Oxford OX1 1BP, 15th November, 4.30pm-6.30pm

Join in Oxford's Christmas Light Night celebrations with some free festive storytelling in the Story Café. Then, after you've enjoyed a story, why not warm yourself up with hot chocolate and tasty treats available.

ST MARY'S CHURCH GROUP PRESENTS CHARLBURY CHRISTMAS ARTWEEKS

November 16th (11am-5pm) and 17th (12pm-4.30pm)

A chance to browse unique cards and gifts produced by highly talented local artists and craftspeople. Lunch will be available on Saturday, and teas will be on offer on both days at the church. More artists will be showing their rich individual skills throughout the town. Sites can be found in the main catalogue or on trail maps from various venues around town.

BRAMPTON HALT CHRISTMAS FAIR

Brampton Halt, Northampton NN6 8BA, 16th – 18th November, 11am-4pm

A lovely range of Christmas gifts and decorations will be available from local traders and crafters, the perfect chance to grab a few early Christmas presents. A BBQ and mulled wine will be available each day.

CHRISTMAS FAIR

Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire HP18 0JH, various dates from 16th November until 13th December, 11am-6pm

This spectacular fair at the front of the house is a Christmas shopping experience not to be missed. The fair will be set against the backdrop of the floodlit North Front of the Manor with its 20ft Christmas trees.

Soak up the sights, smells and sounds of Christmas with our hand selected exhibitors all house in charming wooden chalets. There will be an exciting variety of high quality, unique gifts, decorations, crafts and festive foods to delight you and your loved ones.

DAVENTRY CHRISTMAS MARKET, LATE NIGHT SHOPPING AND LIGHTS

Daventry Town Centre NN11 4HT, 16th November, until 8pm

See the array of festive local food, craft and gift stalls and get all your Christmas shopping done at Daventry's late night shopping evening until 8pm. Plus see the brand new Christmas lights!

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN THE PARLOUR ROOMS

Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire MK18 5EQ, 18th November – 7th December, 10am-4pm

Throughout the season you'll find a select group of stallholders in the atmospheric Parlour Rooms selling homemade and traditional products with different traders every week. The National Trust shop will be filled with Christmas gifts inspired by their special places and hosting regular tastings and meet the makers throughout the seasons.

CARRDUS CHRISTMAS FAIR

Carrdus School, Overthorpe Hall, Banbury OX17 2BS, 23rd November, 10am-4pm

The Fair offers a whole sparkling Christmas package, 50 fabulous stalls, games, arts and craft activities, two performances of Christmas songs and carols by the Carrdus School Choirs, tombolas for all ages, 'Elfie Selfie' stations and much more. There will also be author signings with two local children's authors; Gillian Badger and Mike Barratt. £3 door entry (free entry for under 12s), in aid of ROSY and Katharine House Hospice.

WINTER FOOD FESTIVAL

Market Place Warwick CV34 4SA, 24th November, 10am-5pm

This winter food festival will offer locally sourced fresh produce as part of Warwick's Christmas offering. The winter food festival will have a Christmassy atmosphere and visitors will be able to buy high quality, local produce and treats for Christmas. There will be a wonderful array of delicious street food and drink which will make your Christmas, a truly special one. There will be something for everyone on the 50 plus stalls – even Christmas treats for your dog!

CHRISTMAS LIGHT FESTIVAL

Banbury Town Centre, Banbury OX16 5QB, 24th November, 2pm- 6pm

Launching Banbury into the festive season the lighting will be up and coming on with a bang. This will be a festive family event in the heart of the town where the community come together as one. There will be live stage music, a song and dance marquee, a market and a fairground, as well as children's activities and, of course, Santa will be in his grotto. For event information please email info@banbury.gov.uk or call 01295 250340.

HOPE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Northamptonshire County Cricket Club, Northampton NN1 4PR, 24th November, 10am-3pm

There will be a wide range of stalls selling plenty of gift items. Refreshments will be available on the day and a visit from Santa can be enjoyed.

ST JOHN'S PRIORY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS MARKET EVENING

15 High Street, Banbury OX16 5HX, 28th November, 5.30 – 7.30pm

Browse beautifully crafted luxury gift items from local businesses and school pupils. Refreshments will be available. There will be festive games and a Father Christmas.

WARWICK VICTORIAN EVENING

All over Warwick, 28th November, 5pm-9pm

Touch FM will host a packed programme of entertainment at Warwick's celebrated Victorian Christmas Evening. Father Christmas will help the Mayor of Warwick switch the town's Christmas lights on at 7pm. There will be attractions throughout the town centre including a traditional steam powered carousel, a Victorian Ferris wheel, a helter skelter, fire spinners, children's rides and entertainments, plus a Victorian Market and much more besides.

SIBFORD SCHOOL CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Sibford, Oxfordshire OX15 5QL, 29th November, 2.30pm-5pm

The annual Sibford School Christmas fayre takes place on Friday 29th November from 2.30pm – 5pm. The cost of entry is £2.50 per adult and this includes a hot drink. Children attend for free. This is the perfect opportunity to shop for those thoughtful Christmas presents for friends and family. >>>

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

St Mary's Church, Horsefair, Banbury OX16 0AA, 30th November 10am-4pm

There will be in the region of 40 stalls selling local handmade crafts and beautiful gifts. This will be an ideal opportunity to purchase unique and individual gifts for Christmas. Entry is free and there is tea, coffee and cake available throughout the day to purchase and a chance to relax in the beautiful church.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

Upton House and Gardens OX15 6HT, 30th November – 1st December, 11am-4pm

This annual Christmas craft fair features a carefully selected range of stalls selling a variety of items, perfect for working through those Christmas gift lists. Try some local cheeses, pick up some unique local art and textiles, or just soak in the atmosphere. The house will open at 12pm; timed tickets are essential for entry to the house and can be picked up on the day. Normal admission fees apply. Assistance dogs only.

HEART OF ENGLAND CHRISTMAS FAIR

National Agricultural Exhibition Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth CV8 2LG, 30th November – 1st December, 10am-4pm

A wide range of Christmas and seasonal goodies will be available including art, craft, design, food and drink. This event is all taking place undercover.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Towcester Brewery, Chantry Lane NN12 6YY, 1st December, 12pm-6pm

This will be the Mill's first ever Christmas Fayre. On the ground floor the Tap Room will be open as usual from 12pm. The first floor will have a pop up shop whilst the second will have a Christmas market where there will be a number of different stallholders selling their festive wares including Usborne and Body Shop at Home. More stalls to be confirmed nearer the time.

SHUTFORD XMAS FAYRE

Shutford Village Hall and The George and Dragon, 8th December, 1pm-4pm

A fayre that will consist of many exciting stalls, specialising in traditional products and crafts. Offering a vast selection of Christmas gifts for the home, for yourself and the children. £2 (children free) in aid of Katharine House Hospice.

OXFORD CHRISTMAS MARKET

Broad Street, Oxford City Centre OX1 3AS, 5th – 21st December, Thursday – Saturday (10am-8pm) and Sunday – Wednesday (10am-6.30pm)

The city of dreaming spires will again be filled with festive joy as the Oxford Christmas Market returns to the heart of the city on beautiful and historic Broad Street. With the sound of choirs singing Christmas carols, market traders offering unusual and

handmade gifts, colourful decorations brightening wooden stalls and the aroma of mulled wine and cinnamon drifting in the air - a visit to the Oxford Christmas Market is a truly magical Christmas experience.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET

Town Centre CV37 6AU, 6th (11am- 8pm), 7th (10am-8pm) and 8th December (10am-5pm)

This will be the third of what is now an annual and award winning event which takes place in the town centre. The Victorian Christmas Market is a themed event with stall holders dressed in Victorian costumes. There will be entertainment throughout the town; a stage in Henley Street will host a programme of performances. There will be a traditional funfair, which will include a carousel situated at the bottom of Wood Street and on the Rother Street market area.

WOODFORD HALSE ACADEMY'S CHRISTMAS FAIR

Woodford Halse, Northamptonshire NN11 3RQ, 7th December, 1pm-4pm

A chance to enjoy an afternoon of games, gift stalls and tasty food in the run up to Christmas whilst supporting this local school.

FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET

Birmingham B1 1BD, 7th – 23rd December, 10am-9pm

A firm fixture in the city's annual calendar and, together with the neighbouring

Christmas Craft Market, a massive favourite with both residents and visitors to the city from across the UK and Europe. Birmingham comes alive every winter with the arrival of the market, a clear sign that Christmas is just around the corner. With more than 80 stalls there is something for everyone

WOOD FARM CHRISTMAS CRAFT AND GIFT FAYRE

Wood Farm, Everdon, Daventry NN11 3BH, 15th December, 11am-4pm

A traditional Christmas fair with plenty of gift items to choose from including handmade crafts, food, flowers, beauty, clothing, shoes, wooden crafts, books and jewellery amongst many more. You can also enjoy a mulled wine and mince pie in the beautiful surroundings of Wood Farm.

SANTA FUN RUN

1st December

Join with family, friends and colleagues and take on the annual Katharine House Hospice Santa Fun Run on Sunday 1 December at 10am at Wykham Park Academy in Banbury.

Choose from a 5km or 1.5km route and bring your energy and festive spirit to help raise £25,000, which is enough to fund the inpatient unit for five days over Christmas!

With music, refreshments and children's activities, including a chance to visit Santa's grotto, the Santa Fun Run is sure to get you in the Christmas spirit.

Sign up at www.khh.org.uk/santa

WE'RE RUNNING FOR NANA!

A message from Molly, age 9

'Last year I ran the Santa Fun Run with my family and it was so much fun! It was hard and muddy but really exciting doing it with lots of Santas. Our legs got tired quickly, but we managed to do it with a little help from everyone cheering us on.

We finally finished and celebrated with a nice chocolate bar from the coffee van. We ran for our Nana Ronnie who was the best Nana in the world - she would have laughed so much seeing us doing the run all dressed up!

Nana Ronnie went to Katharine House for two weeks. It was a very sad time for us but it was also nice as all the nurses really looked after us as they knew we were upset.

One day one of the lovely nurses talked to us about Nana and what was happening and gave us some knitted cats to help us remember her. All the grandkids got one and we all love our 'nana cats'.

We hope to see lots of Santas this year.

A WONDERFULLY INDULGENT GIFT GUIDE FROM WHITTLEBURY

Whittlebury Park's Spa shop is brimming with luxurious treats. Sophie Clear, Whittlebury's Spa Manager, shares her top three product recommendations, which have been handpicked for their seasonal twist.

1 Espa's Luxury Spa Collection

The perfect set for everyone designed to leave you feeling thoroughly pampered! This gift set includes both face and body products from one of their most popular cleansers to their hero product, Pink Hair & Scalp Mud.

2 Elemis Pro-Collagen Night-Time Wonders

With the party season fast approaching, this gift set will not only give your skin the ultimate glow just in time for the festivities but will restore and rejuvenate.

3 Espa's Winter Spice Deluxe Candle

An ideal purchase to prepare your home for the festive period! This candle will instantaneously wrap your senses with its warm, spicy scent. Winter Spice's festive blend adds a perfectly welcoming touch to your home in the lead-up to Christmas.

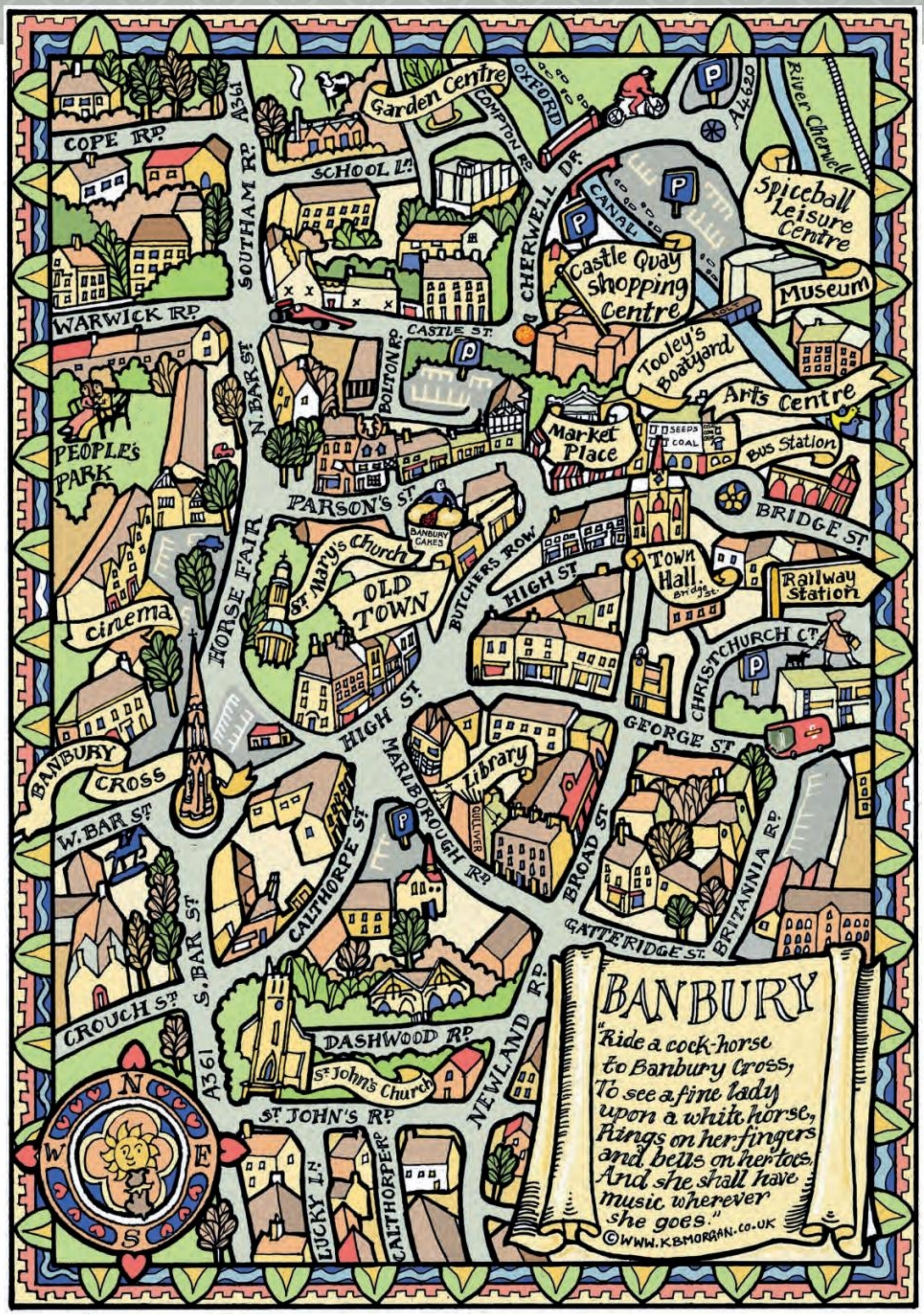
WHITTLEBURY PARK

We've also launched our new seasonal Spa packages which are ideal as a gift or as a treat for yourself. Our Silent Night Retreat which is £99 per person* includes a two-course lunch and a wonderful 70-minute treatment which is a synergy of aromatherapy and massage to leave you feeling revitalised.

Register to hear about Whittlebury's exciting Black Friday Spa Shopping Event on Friday 29th November. There's lots of exclusive offers for one day only.

Find out more by visiting whittlebury.com/blackfridayspa

**Terms and conditions apply, see our website for more information*



Map artwork by Katie Morgan

'RIDE A COCK HORSE TO BANBURY CROSS TO SEE A FINE LADY ON A WHITE HORSE…'

That famous rhyme has been around for centuries now and it's as true today (in one sense) as it was back in the 1600s. The rhyme alludes to taking a trip to Banbury to see a fine lady (a member of the Fiennes family) on a white horse, but also taking a 'cock horse' or pack horse to buy goods in the town.

Back then, Banbury could draw visitors from an area around ten or 15 miles in radius around the town… today, the catchment area is far wider.

The shopping centres however have changed little. Whilst out of town shopping centres are becoming the norm in other towns and cities, Banbury still manages to attract shoppers to its quaint, vibrant, old town centre.

What has changed for the better however, is the support offered to commercial establishments in the old town. There are a number of intitiatives in place, including BIDs and town centre partnerships, all of which have been highly successful in improving the shopping experience in Banbury.

For the new visitor, head for the historic Banbury Cross and do a circuit of the shopping areas, including the High Street, Market Place, Butcher's Row, Church Lane and Parson's Street – Banbury's 'lanes'…

Beautiful Banbury!

DOODLEDASH INTERIORS

3 PARSONS STREET, BANBURY OX16 5LW
07527 229739
DOODLEDASH.CO.UK

Doodledash Interiors is an independent family business in Banbury Old Town. Offering one off pieces of upcycled and vintage furniture, a furniture painting service, workshops teaching upcycling and creative techniques and bespoke wooden signs - Doodledash is never knowingly ordinary!

We constantly search out unusual gifts and decorative home décor items to help you create a unique home. Follow us on *Facebook* at Doodledash Interiors for new arrivals and upcycling inspiration.

BUYWISE

45 PARSONS STREET
BANBURY OX16 5NA
01295 266087
BUYWISEAPPLIANCES.CO.UK

Buywise is an independent, family run retail outlet that has been selling domestic electrical appliances for over 30 years. We are proud of our dedicated sales team who can offer informed product knowledge and advice, to ensure that every individual need is met. Our permanent display offers a full range of dishwashers, washing machines, refrigeration, range cookers, freestanding cookers, integrated (built in) appliances, and tumble dryers. Come to us for great customer service, excellent value for money and fast delivery.

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Antique Modern Mix is an antique centre in Banbury on Parsons Street based in a three storey Georgian building.

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REVIVAL MK2

Mark Allitt (pictured right) has been at the helm at Revival after the untimely passing of previous owner. the late Nik Hale. Mark had known Nik well and when the chance came to carry on with his business, Mark jumped at the chance.

"I have always wanted to run my own business," said Mark. "The chance came to carry on with Nik's legacy and I thought it was exactly the right time. I am so pleased and happy to have had such a good response from all of Nik's old customers."

Mark took over at Revival in August and is helping to raise money to look into research into Addison's Disease, which Nik had.

Mark has already been highly successful at Revival, managing to persuade the famous 'Weekend Offender' company to commission some Banbury branded 'T' shirts and sweatshirts.

"The Weekend Offender Banbury' brand has already become collectable," said Mark. "It's usually just the big cities that get their names on the Weekend Offender gear, we've got Banbury!"

Revival Mk2

iconic, vintage, stylish men's clothing store based in Banbury, Oxfordshire

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WINTER EYESIGHT

The autumn and winter months are harder on your eyes as there are fewer daylight hours and we experience more artificial light, *writes Helen Gilbert from Harrold Opticians.*

When it is colder outside it's easier to spend more time on electronic devices. To prevent eyestrain it's advisable to look up for 20 seconds at a distance of more than 20 feet every 20 minutes. Also if you wear glasses consider having 'Blue control' lenses. They can help with the fatigue caused by the blue light that's emitted from screens. It isn't a tinted lens and is different to a 'reflection free' lens.

With a trend for higher vehicles like SUVs and MPVs, headlights are much higher. The brighter adaptive

lights can be blinding to oncoming car drivers and passengers. Lenses especially designed for driving may help. Enroute lenses have a special glare filter and an optional enhancing filter. Drivers get less glare and reflections and better contrast in low light. Available as single vision lenses or as varifocals especially designed to give an enhanced field of view for distance and the dashboard.

Reading in the autumn and winter months can also often be harder on the eyes. To help combat this ensure you have a good source of light, such as a reading lamp with a bare bulb, angled over your shoulder pointing directly at what you are reading. The most important thing of all is to eat a healthy diet and have your eyes checked regularly. Don't be afraid to ask your optician if you have any questions.

EAT ART INK

21 PARSON'S STREET, BANBURY OX16 5LY
07877 030315 / 01295 275150 / 01295 255663
WWW.THEARTERYONLINE.CO.UK
WWW.FONTATTOO.COM

Eat Art Ink is a unique building made up of several creative independent businesses in the heart of Banbury old town. Call into the Old Town Cafe and Gallery for a lovely warm drink and a bite to eat and take a look at the art work on display; or wander into The Artery to see a wide range of art and craft supplies, or maybe take one of their many art classes. The top floor is where the Fellowship of the Needle is located where Roger and Amy can discuss tattoo or piercing requirements. A warm welcome is guaranteed.

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STAND UP COMEDY AT ATIC

Since 2015, Atic, the intimate comedy venue with excellent customer service in Banbury has been hosting shows including household names such as Rhod Gilbert, James Acaster, Sara Pascoe and Ed Byrne.

Whether you are looking for established comedians testing out new material for UK tours, a comedy club style show or upcoming comedians breaking through onto the circuit Atic has it all. The shows are popular with both regular customers and people travelling from all over the county for an evening full of laughter and entertainment.

• *Milton Jones*

• *Sara Pascoe*

As well as the monthly pro-nights, Atic also hosts a monthly free open mic comedy night to give amateur comedians a platform to test out material and a chance to perform in front of a live audience. Also, there is a regular Polish stand up comedy show, featuring some of the best UK based Polish comedians.

As well as comedy, Atic is also a hub for arts. Monthly poetry nights, live bands, painting classes and acoustic music nights are all regular features for Atic.

Already lined up to perform in the winter season; Gary Delaney, Dane Baptiste (as seen on Live at the Apollo) Mike Wilmot (as seen on Never mind the Buzzcocks) and Jess Fostekew (performing a tour warm up show) with more still to be announced!

Atic has another venue in Bicester that also runs three different monthly comedy nights, as well as regular live music, arts and crafts, and Salsa dance classes.

For more information on upcoming shows and to purchase tickets please visit www.rocktheatic.com

• *Rhod Gilbert*

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COUNTRYMAN

With such woolly headed thinking, George Fenemore considers that the runaway 'Willy the Pink' could well make a good MP!

It's that time of the year again, the ewe flocks have had a good sort out and replacements have been brought in from the north of England sales. The boys disappeared to the Rugby sheep sales and came back with seven new Tups and after a few days of TLC and extra feed all of them are out on the rampage! Just as last year, the farm student was sent off to select a ram of his choice and bid for it. Last year it was 'Blue Boy', this year it was 'Willy the Pink' a one year old Texel ram.

Why 'pink'?

Well it is customary to colour dip rams before sale, so 'Willy' had a rather distinct hue. He had only been on the farm for five days when he went

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missing! It was 'all hands on deck' to find 'Willy'! Every field, hedgerow and ditch was searched but there was no sign of the wayward ram. Then I realised that the wind was coming from the direction of the ewe flock and on close inspection I realised 'Willy' was 'on the job'. He had travelled 1.5 miles across two farms and had swam the river to reach his goal! Although we shall start the lambing season a little earlier than anticipated after his exploits, I had not the heart to shut him up in the stable, so the next day we turned out his companions… perhaps 'Willy' would make a good PM! After all it would be no different from the woolly headed thinking that we have endured for the last few years.

Grandson Tom hand reared one of our Cotswold lambs on the 'bottle' and named him Boris. He taught him to halter 'lead' and took him to some of the local shows in the young shepherd classes. Tom and Boris made a guest appearance at the Deddington Farmers Market, but we did not give him a blond topknot as it would have been an insult to the sheep! I have worked with sheep and other livestock all my life but just what the farming future holds for the boys is very uncertain.

It has been a month of ovine adventures, one of our breeding ewes decided to swim the river to get to pastures new on the other side, the boy's Ben and Tom decided that rather than take a long drive it would be a good ruse to build a raft using two plastic barrels and a pallet! The boys were fitted up with safety harnesses and off they went. All was well until Jake (the hooligan), a young sheep dog, decided to join the party and upset the trim of the raft which turned turtle depositing all three in the river. All three are good swimmers and climbed out on the other side. The ewe being faced with two sodden shepherds and a wet dog decided it was time to return and jumped back into the river and returned to where she came from. The boys and the hooligan swam back and went home to change but just what their mother had to say when they turned up in the kitchen dripping wet I have no Idea.

TOM AND 'BORIS THE SHEEP' MADE A GUEST APPEARANCE AT THE DEDDINGTON FARMERS MARKET, BUT WE DID NOT GIVE HIM A BLOND TOPKNOT AS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AN INSULT TO THE SHEEP!

With the FYM (farmyard manure) spread and the cover crops planted, along with the winter sheep feed and the cereal crops for next harvest in the ground, the farming year is winding down towards Christmas with the goose getting fat. In our case it's turkeys, (yet another small enterprise). In these difficult days at least I will know where my Christmas lunch has come from. Keeping turkeys is something new to Clifton but not to the family as my grandmother and my mother both kept poultry. On the farm where I was born we had a little of everything, a dairy herd with the best yielding cows going to a British Friesian bull and the others going to a Hereford bull. All calf's were reared by the suckling herd of Hereford cross cows. There was a sheep flock, an outdoor pig herd and some arable crops with most of the grain being fed back to the livestock. I would spend two or three days a week in the 'milling shed' getting the feed ready.

We arrived at Clifton in the spring of 1974 and farmed cattle, sheep, pigs and arable crops. Today it's just sheep and arable but with the predicted mayhem after the start of 'Armageddon' we may well have to revert to a little of everything. We now have the management of two flocks of sheep, one is managed as a non organic flock and the other is organic. There's not a lot of difference in the way the flocks are run. The new 'boss' at DEFRA has decreed that all livestock should be sent to the nearest abattoir, but sadly due to DEFRA regulations there are few abattoirs left in the country. If I want to keep the organic lambs in the system they have to travel to south Devon, the nearest 'organic' abattoir… now what was that about animal welfare? So all our lambs take a short trip of some 18 miles to the local abattoir, a company set up by farmers and managed by farmers.

The latest uttering from DEFRA about the ban on live exports and the need to use a local abattoir seems to neglect the many livestock farmers along the south coast… the nearest abattoir for them is on the other side of the 'ditch'. Ho, what a tangled web our career politicians weave.

Ho well it's 6am and the hooligan and myself are off to see just what 'Willy the Pink' and his pals are up to, we have 16 rams split into two lots, the first lot will come back into the buildings after about 10 days on the rampage to receive some TLC and R&R and the second lot will go out to tidy up. Then all 16 will go out with the North Aston flock unless 'Willy the Pink' decides to go 'walkabout' again! ◆

WORDS: Bruce Cox

TROPICAL STRATFORD

The attractive riverside town of Stratford-upon-Avon in our *Four Shires* is one of the most visited 'tourist towns' in Britain but don't let that put you off making a day trip or afternoon visit. The world famous Royal Shakespeare Theatre and other Shakespeare linked attractions are the focus of interest for visitors but there is a lot more to enjoy in the town.

One alternative attraction is the Butterfly Farm located close to the riverside across from the theatre, the canal basin and the town itself – and it has the advantage of being an attraction that is open whatever the weather. In fact, the building has its own climate – a tropical one that is maintained year-round for the convenience of its permanent inhabitants!

Visitors to the farm can enjoy the unique pleasure of watching hundreds of the world's most spectacular and colourful butterflies all around them, feeding and flying in a wonderful tropical environment. The landscaped greenhouse (temperature-controlled to match the inhabitant's home environment) is the largest butterfly display in the UK. Throughout the year, there are over 250 different species from 20 different countries and at any one time, there are approximately 2000 free flying individual butterflies, of all shapes, sizes and colours.

Some of the butterflies actually breed within the Butterfly Farm while the rest come from butterfly breeders in various tropical zones around the world. All the places from which the farm buys butterflies from are either conservation or 'Village' projects. In the latter case, butterfly breeding is the main source of income for most of the villagers. These breeding operations have been set up to enable communities to earn a living without causing any damage to the environment and wildlife around them. Not only is this

good from a conservation point of view, it also allows families all over the tropics to earn a sustainable income and helps to preserve the rainforest whilst educating visitors to attractions like the one at Stratford.

In the Discovery Zone at the farm you can see every stage of the butterfly's fascinating life cycle - the egg, the caterpillar, the chrysalis (also known as the pupae) and finally the emerging adult.

So as you leave the zone, don't miss the 'Emerging Case' as this is where you will discover row upon row of beautiful pupae, hanging like jewels from wooden rods. The case is one of the most important aspects of the Butterfly Farm as it is here that the butterflies emerge from their pupae and prepare their wings for first flight. Within the case, in fact, you are quite likely to actually see butterflies hatching from their pupae.

The pupae are imported each week in their thousands from butterfly farmers in the tropics and it is only after each individual pupa has been unpacked and checked for quality that they are very carefully glued on to wooden rods. These rods are then placed within the case and the butterflies left to hatch.

Moths are often overlooked and under-appreciated but at the farm you will also find out just how beautiful moths can be. Some are even more colourful than butterflies.

Take a close look at the cocoons hanging from the trees and you may even see a freshly emerged atlas moth. The tips of the atlas moth wings resemble the head of a snake and the moth will trick any potential predators into thinking it is a snake by quivering its wing tips at any sign of danger!

Talking of snakes, there are even a few at the farm in what the management like to term the Mini Beast Metropolis! These live safely contained in enclosed terrariums but keep an eye open for the large but friendly iguana lizards that do live loose in the farm. They are friendly but mostly keep their distance from the visitors, spending their time mainly up in the rafters or otherwise out of reach.

On the other hand, although the iguanas don't generally behave like animals in a 'petting zoo' there are times (usually during the school holidays) where you can get close to and hold creatures such as a giant African millipede, African giant land snails, Madagascan hissing cockroaches and a variety of stick insects!

Finally, look out for the massive and totally fascinating colony of small 'leafcutter ants' – the largest such colony in Britain. You can actually watch hundreds of them taking leaves back to their nest, marching in file, each with its own leaf portion many times larger than its body, along ropes strung above your heads! ◆

For more details go to www.butterflyfarm.co.uk

WHAT A YEAR FOR BEN CASE RACING!

The 2018/19 National Hunt season saw trainer Ben Case achieve a notable landmark with Croco Bay, owned by Lady Jane Grosvenor and ridden by Kielan Woods, providing their first Cheltenham Festival winner. Croco Bay won the Johnny Henderson Grand Annual Chase. It was a phenomenal training performance with a 12 year old horse, that had spent a long spell out injured.

This success was celebrated at their recent Owners Day, held at Wardington Gate Farm on the historic Edgcote Estate which provides a fantastic location and exceptional training facilities. A parade of horses was followed by an enjoyable marquee lunch.

Ben took the opportunity to thank his owners for their continued support and also his dedicated team for all their hard work during the year which ensures that each horse enjoys exceptional care and individual attention.

• *Cathy Beaumont, Ben Case and Sarah Case*

• *Malcolm Batchelor, Ben Case, Delyth Batchelor*

• *Neil Hutley, Elizabeth Middleton*

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• *Emilia Case*

• *Ben Case (left) and Becky, Megan and Danny Hannig (above)*

Images by Harry Rhodes, Tudor Photography

• *Kielan Woods, Lady Jane Grosvenor*

• *Ollie Bowd, Charlie Case, George Case*

• *Shanty Alley and Pat Murray*

• *Open day visitor with the mare, Sheila Tanist*

• *Sally Lucock, Adam Lucock, Pat Murray, Shanty Alley, Charlie Case, Danny Hannig, Croco Bay, Lady Jane Grosvenor, Kielan Woods, Graceful Legend, Maxine Filby, Ben Case*

• *Guests watch the parade of horses*

• *John and Mary Sullivan (above) and Team Case members (below)*

• *John Grindlay, Patricia Grindlay, Jill Sutton*

• *Tracey Leibling, Joanna Bowd*

• *Wendy Moore, Cathy Beaumont*

ADVERITING FEATURE

GARDEN EVENTS

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN THE GARDENER'S WORLD THIS MONTH

UPTON HOUSE AND GARDENS

Near Banbury, Warwickshire OX15 6HT

Give it a Go - Festive Fascinators: 7th November, 10am -1pm. Join local milliner Lucy Bowler and have a go at making your own fabulous festive fascinator.

Afternoon Tea Talk - Upton's Painted Landscapes: 14th November, 2pm-3.30pm. Look beyond the portraits and figures dominating Upton's painting collection, and become acquainted with the landscapes within some of Lord Bearsted's most well known paintings.

Stir Up Sunday: 24th November, 12pm-4pm. Join in the traditional activity of 'stirring up' the Upton Christmas pudding, take away a piece of the pudding to enjoy on Christmas day.

Upton Makes the House Desirable this Christmas: 29th November – 23rd December, 12noon-4pm. Enjoy a charmingly stylish Upton Christmas. See the house decorated for a 'modern' 1930s Christmas.

CANONS ASHBY

Near Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 3SD

Hedgehog or Rabbit Sculpture Workshop: 20th November, 10am-4pm. Discover the art of textile sculpture and create a charming rabbit or hedgehog sculpture.

Crafting for Christmas: 23rd - 24th November, 11.30am-3pm. Start getting ready for Christmas! Make a traditional orange decoration or colour a wooden decoration to take home for the festive season.

Festive Wreath Workshops: 27th - 28th November, 10am-12noon. Nothing says 'Christmas is here' quite like a wreath on your front door. Spend a few hours crafting your own festive wreath using greenery from the grounds of Canons Ashby.

STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS

Buckingham MK18 5EQ

Ranger Walk: 9th November, 10.30am-12noon. Join the rangers on a vigorous walk through the parkland as they'll talk

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you through the conservation, wildlife surveying and restoration work that goes into caring for this special place.

Carols in the Courtyard: Weekends from 30th November – 22nd December, 10am-4pm. Enjoy yuletide cheer in the New Inn courtyard listening to traditional carols and music performed by local musicians whilst you sip on a winter warming drink.

Young Rangers Taster Session: 30th November, 1am-4pm. Stowe are setting up a new Young Rangers volunteer team for 12 - 18 year olds. Pop along to this fun taster session to find out more.

BARN FARM PLANTS

Upper Wardington, Near Banbury OX17 1SN

Festive Shopping and Workshop Day: 9th November, 11am-3pm. A festive day of fun! Sample the latest food and drink and enjoy some festive shopping too.

Willow Workshop - Wreaths and Christmas Decorations: 14th November, 10am-1pm. Make your own willow creation and take home something wonderful to treasure! £30 per person.

BATSFORD ARBORETUM

Moreton-In-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 9AD

Christmas Needle Felting Workshop: 2nd – 3rd November, 10am-4pm. Join Blossom Felts for a fun and relaxed weekend of crafting! Create your own 'Christmouse' on 2nd November or a Christmas Penguin on 3rd November! £45 per person (£81 per person for both days if booked together), including all equipment and felt as well as tea and coffee throughout the day. There is a cafe on site or you are welcome to bring your own packed lunch. To book please contact Blossom Felts on 07870 226621 or email blossomfelts@yahoo.com

WHILTON LOCKS GARDEN VILLAGE

Near Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 2NH

Ice Skating: 16th November – 5th January, various times. This popular ice skating rink is under cover and offers both peak and off peak skating times. Skate aids are also available for those who need them.

WATERPERRY GARDENS

Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1LA

Find Santa's Reindeer: 23rd November – 23rd December, 10am-5pm. Help Rudolph find his friends who are lost all around the gardens! £2.50 per child. Children must be accompanied by an adult for whom the winter garden entrance fee applies.

WORDS: Cathy Black

Add a fabulously ornate mirror to reflect your newly updated room, like this Egyptian Art hand forged and etched bronze mirror, £67.62 by Craftopia at etsy.com

THE STYLE FILE

ETHEREAL EGYPTIAN

This term at school, my son has been studying ancient Egypt. With a house full of Ancient Egyptian homework thoughts are most definitely turning towards Egyptian Styling for this, our second instalment of the 'Style File' series.

Some 12 years ago I visited Egypt, taking in the many sights and sounds that this Arabian country had to offer. Towering temples, some intact and some in ruin greeted us but I remember each being very dominant, not only within the landscape but also when it came to impact of style. The Ancient Egyptians really knew how to celebrate life and, even from a quick look at the Karnak temple, with its elaborate sphinx lined entrance it is hard not to fall in love with this country's ancient historic architecture.

Ancient Egyptian is one of the most expressive and dramatic home decorating styles you can adopt. This is a theme that has the potential to add antique chic and luxurious elegance to any modern interior. This style, with its rich colours, classy

This stamped copper and wood Egyptian coffee table by Vad Trevare Norway will set you back £1,089.13 from House of Vint Furniture, vntg.com... But isn't it divine!

A chic ruin ornament will give a quirky feel and this Rosewood Blue Ribbon Egyptian Urn from amazon.co.uk fits the bill perfectly, £8.30

Wall hangings always make a dramatic statement. This Egyptian Tapestry is just £19.96 at Etsy

If you love the style so much that you can't leave home without it, the beautiful 'Treasures of Egypt' handbag (above) is a wonderful accessory, £79.96, The Bradford Exchange, bradford.co.uk

Pick a supersoft glistening gold rug to add warmth and luxury, by Viceroy, £24.95, amazon.co.uk

Decorate a mantlepiece with this fun 'Cleo-CAT-tra' figurine, £29.99, The Bradford Exchange

A 'Splendours of Ancient Egypt' porcelain vase is not for water, but looks gorgeous, £99.96, The Bradford Exchange

black and golden yellow accents complemented by statues, mysterious hieroglyphs and unique designs will bring the old world into your modern surroundings, whilst also adding an exotic focal point to your decoration.

Now I am not suggesting that you line your driveway with 'Sphinx like' sculptures (although it's an idea!) but there are many ways to welcome a little Egyptian style into your home.

Wall decorations: Embrace ancient Egypt through the use of hieroglyphs. These need not take over your room but could work well in adding names to your children's bedrooms or to the main utilitarian spaces such as your bathroom or kitchen. Many hieroglyphs are beautiful works of art in their own right and if you have a little artistic flair it shouldn't take too much imagination to create some beautiful accents for your rooms.

Colour palette: Golden yellow hues symbolise the worship of Ra, the Sun God of ancient Egypt. From desert sand shades to golden yellow, all will add brightness to your home. A word of caution here however, yellow can become overbearing so use it as an accent only and match it with ivory, ochre or beige for a perfect Egyptian backdrop.

Flooring: When choosing your flooring, look at ceramic tiles, cork flooring, artificial parquet or laminate, all with a pattern which embraces the ancient Egyptian style.

Decorative boarder: A small decorative border between the wall and ceiling may work well and you could perhaps decorate this border with a pictographic pattern.

Arches: If you are looking for something more structural then you may wish to add arches above your doors and windows. These are very reminiscent of ancient Egyptian architecture.

Furniture: As a rule, the furniture should fill your home with a special richness and luxury. Beautiful chairs and small benches, made of dark wood with carved detail will fit the style beautifully. Many Egyptian furniture pieces are also colourful, unique and decorated with enamel, mother of pearl, gilding and inlay.

Textile: Do pay attention to the colour, pattern and texture of any textiles you bring into your home. Rich materials, such as light silk and atlas will underline the richness of an ancient Egyptian style. If this is not in your budget then any natural decorative fabric in solid bright colours will also be a brilliant choice for creating light, elegance and comfort. From rugs to cushions and throws this is one area where Egyptian style can flourish.

Accessories: Complement your room by adding vases, pictures and statuettes. All that matters is that they evoke an association with the epoch of ancient Egypt. These may be antique amphoras, statuettes of pharaohs and Nefertiti, or pictures with the Egyptian hieroglyphs and ancient Egyptian gods, for example.

The mysteries of the ancient Egyptian civilisation continues to mesmerise people a millennium later. Egyptian interior style is a very popular choice. This is not unsurprising as Egypt continues to be one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world. Many people may think that this style of the interior is better suited to large detached houses, mansions and cottages, but that is not true. The Egyptian interior may be reproduced in any style of property no matter what the age or location. This is a style to have fun with and one that will bring some mysticism into your home. ◆

Vintage antique Egyptian Royalty cushion, £33.70, at zazzle.co.uk; Black/gold cushion cover, £15.50 by Art Deco Decor; Curzon sofa, £4235 from Furniture Village

EGYPTIAN GODS TO TURN TO FOR INSPIRATION

The beliefs and rituals surrounding gods formed the core of ancient Egyptian religion. Deities represented natural forces and phenomena, and the Egyptians supported and appeased them with offerings and rituals.

After the founding of the Egyptian state around 3100 BC, the authority to perform these tasks was controlled by the pharaoh, who claimed to be the gods' representative on earth and managed the temples where the rituals were carried out.

Ra, the sun god: The most important god of the ancient Egyptians. They believed that Ra was swallowed every night by the sky goddess Nut and was reborn every morning.

Anubis, god of embalming and the dead: Jackals were often seen in cemeteries and, as Anubis took the form of a man's body with the head of a jackal, the ancient Egyptians believed that he watched over their dead.

Ma'at, goddess of truth, justice and harmony: Depicted as a woman with a feather on her head, She was associated with the balance of things on earth. She was also the daughter of Ra.

These are of course only a few of the many Egyptian Gods you may wish to look at when accenting your home in an Egyptian style.

HAYFIELD HAS BUSIEST EVER LAUNCH AT FORMER WWII AIRFIELD IN WEST OXFORDSHIRE

Nearly 100 interested parties visited Hayfield Green in the historic Oxfordshire village of Stanton Harcourt recently. The luxury development by award winning housebuilder Hayfield is breathing new life into a former World War II RAF Airfield.

The expansive 21 acre development features 66 two, three, four and five bedroom homes, surrounded by large areas of open space, joined by a series of public walkways and monuments recognising the historical significance of the site.

CLOTHING STORE IN LEAMINGTON WILL MAKE WAY FOR NEW APARTMENTS AND RETAIL SPACE

Peacocks (previously Store 21) in Leamington town centre will make way for the construction of a new building which will include retail space and 26 apartments. But none of the new homes will fall under the 'affordable' bracket and no car parking is included in the plans. The application has been made by TAG Exclusive Properties Urban Ltd and would involve the building currently occupied by the clothing shop Peacocks being demolished. The new building being constructed would include retail space on the ground floor and residential apartments consisting of nine one bedroom apartments, 16 two bedroom apartments and one three bedroom apartment.

WARWICK POPULATION

The population of Warwick district is set to increase by 30 per cent over the next four years.

This figure was quoted by the leader of Warwick District Council (WDC), Cllr Andrew Day, as he addressed the council's plans to cope with the thousands of new homes set to be built.

After being instructed by central government to find room for tens of thousands of new homes, WDC put together a blueprint (known as the Local Plan) detailing where the properties will be built - many of which have been and will be located south of Leamington, Warwick and Whitnash.

Sold!

FISHER GERMAN

Fisher German are delighted to have sold Steane Grounds Barn near Brackley. This wonderful rural home has masses of light centred around a huge living room with two former barn doors – ideal for entertaining. Set in grounds of over an acre and presented in excellent order, a sale was soon agreed.

Fisher German have extensive experience in selling both new and period properties. If you are thinking of selling, whether a new development or a period village house, we would be delighted to help you with your sale.

For further information contact Matthew at matthew.allen@fishergerman.co.uk • 01295 271555 • fishergerman.co.uk

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FISHER GERMAN

Fabulous edge of Cotswolds country property

Whichford, Warwickshire

- 5 bedroom principal dwelling
- 3 bedroom bungalow
- 1 bedroom apartment
- Stabling & manège
- Garaging & outbuildings
- Arable, pasture & woodland, 33.4 acres
- Wonderful far reaching views
- JSA Seccombes
- EPC ratings C & D

£ Guide price – **£2,750,000**

Matthew Allen

Toby Harris

Jackie Sweetland

Robert Russell

Alison Wenham

Banbury **01295 271555**

Akeley, Buckinghamshire

Stunning modern house in delightful rural setting

- Substantial well designed 4 bedroom house
- 2 receptions, 4 ensuite bedrooms
- 1 bed annexe, parking, gardens, grounds
- Stables, horse walker, lunging ring, manège
- In all about 12.17 acres

£ Guide price – **£2,100,000**

Bloxham, Oxfordshire

Detached home for modernisation in 1/3 acre

- Hall, sitting room, dining room
- Kitchen/breakfast room
- 3 bedrooms, bathroom
- Outbuildings, parking, gardens
- EPC rating G

£ Guide price – **£550,000**

FISHER GERMAN

Little Bourton, Oxfordshire

Fabulous renovated period home

- Drawing room, sitting room, conservatory
- Dining room, kitchen/breakfast room
- 4 double bedrooms, bathroom
- Garden, double garage, off-street parking
- EPC rating E

£ Guide price – **£625,000**

Shenington, Oxfordshire

Plot for permission for 3 bedroom home

- GIA - house: 1,900 sq ft, plot - 0.24 acre
- Proposed accommodation:
- Open plan kitchen/dining/sitting room
- Utility room, 3 ensuite double bedrooms
- Off-street parking with carport

£ Guide price – **£250,000**

Matthew Allen

Toby Harris

Jackie Sweetland

Robert Russell

Alison Wenham

Banbury **01295 271555**

• *That sinking feeling, 1996*

• *Modern flood defences*

UNDER THE SEA

COUNCIL ADVICE TO PROTECT YOURSELF DURING FLOOD SEASON

West Oxfordshire District Council is calling on residents to be aware of the risks associated with flooding. Flooding can be incredibly stressful and making sure you are prepared and aware of how to act both before and after a flood could make a big difference to how you manage in such circumstances.

10 top tips for staying safe during floods:

1 Make sure you are prepared for flooding before it happens. Sign up for free flood warnings and create a personal flood plan.

2 Flood prevention equipment can help stop flood water getting into your property. Consider using floodboards, sandbags and air brick covers to reduce the impact of flooding on your home or business.

3 Avoid contact with flood water. Driving in flood water significantly increases risk of drowning. Do not drive or walk through flood water and do not let children play in flood water.

4 Check your insurance cover. Don't underestimate the value of your contents.

5 Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water mains supplies before flood water enters your home.

6 Feeling distressed after a flood is normal. Support from family and friends is important during the recovery process.

7 Do not use petrol or diesel generators indoors to dry out your home. Exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill.

8 When cleaning up after a flood, wear rubber gloves, boots, eye protection, and always wash hands afterwards. Flood water can be hazardous so always make sure you are protected.

9 Move your family, pets and flood kit to a high place with means of escape.

10 Do not turn on gas or electrics if they may be wet. Only turn them on once they have been checked by a qualified technician.

When the Environmental Agency issues a flood alert due to an imminent risk of flooding, councils provide sandbags

• *King's Sutton flood, 1968*

• *Flooding in Banbury during the 1960s*

• *Flooding in Banbury, 1998*

• *An aerial view of King's Sutton floods in 2016*

free of charge. Councils will deliver sandbags to vulnerable residents at times of need. To arrange collection of ready made sandbags from Witney, please call: 01993 861000.

If you would like to report a flood you can report to either the County Council or district council emergency response team. Call 999 for immediate assistance if there is a risk to life or a risk of serious property or environmental damage.

If residents would like to be extra prepared, the district council will deliver sandbags outside of a flood warning for a fee or they can fill sandbags themselves at our depots across the area.

The council's out of hours emergency service number is 0151 3432945. Alternatively sign up for the Environmental Agency's free flood alert service on 03459881188.

If you are affected by flooding and are in need of temporary accommodation, please call us on 01993 861000.

More information around flood prevention and support for those affected by flooding in West Oxfordshire can be found online at www.westoxon.gov.uk/residents/environment/flooding ◆

• *Flooding in Shipston, 2007*

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TREE HOUSE HOLIDAYS

WIN AN OVERNIGHT STAY AND CHAMPAGNE WELCOME AT WILL'S TREE HOUSE

Four Shires has teamed up with Winchcombe Farm Holidays in Upper Tysoe to offer one lucky reader and three guests the chance to win a night's stay in Will's Tree House – Warwickshire's very first holiday home tree house.

Winchcombe Farm is home to three bespoke luxury holiday homes nestling in an idyllic Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the rolling Warwickshire countryside on the North East tip of The Cotswolds, and lies beneath the famous landmark battleground of Edgehill.

The prize winner will be welcomed with a champagne hamper at the breathtaking, architecturally designed structure, which nestles in four sycamore and ash trees with three of them poking through the outside deck and one growing through the kitchen!

The woodland area which the tree house sits in is a children's paradise (and some adults too!) with pirate ship, lookout tower, climbing frame for toddlers and ground level trampoline.

This luxurious abode has a bubbling hot tub situated on a lower deck and an outdoor shower hidden in a private alcove.

Designed with outdoor living in mind, the huge tree lined part covered deck area is extremely well equipped with charcoal pizza oven, gas barbeque, hanging chairs, hammock and dining area.

The spacious main living area houses a comfy king size bed and some ingenious full size single bunk beds imported from France, that fold down from a hidden cabin behind the sofa. It also has a fully fitted kitchen and bathroom.

Winchcombe Farm Holidays has three further lodges – Bob's Lodge (sleeps 8), the Chicken Shed (sleeps 5) and their brand new George's Getaway lodge, all with private hot tubs, barbecues, hammocks and geodesic domes with circular bed for stargazing.

Five star features of the new lodge also include two freestanding bath tubs, huge outdoor decking area and outdoor shower.

They can be viewed at www.winchcombefarm.co.uk or call 01295 680190 for details. ◆

Terms and Conditions

All entrants must be aged 18 or over.

The winner can pick a weekday night (Sunday to Thursday) of their choice, subject to availability and the owner's discretion, between 1st January and 2nd April 2020.

The prize is non-transferable and no cash alternative is available.

The winner must consent to providing personal information for the purpose of administering the booking and may be required to cooperate with publicity.

• *A dapper rider from Warwickshire*

• *Coming up Five Mile Drive*

• *Swerford rider Shawn Parmakis who raised **nearly fifteen hundred** pounds in sponsorship*

DAPPER DESPITE THE DRIZZLE

WITH MAGGIE CHAPLIN

It's 10.30 on Sunday morning at Triumph Oxford Premier Bikes garage in Wootton on the outskirts of Oxford. This is a very special Sunday and there's a tangible air of anticipation; a feeling that something momentous is about to happen. A sea of gleaming chrome and the sparkling windshields of dozens of motorbikes grace the forecourt and more bikes are turning up all the time. The marshals in their hi-vis jackets are doing a great job at lining them up in neat, close rows, whilst not denying the spectators the opportunity to gawp at the amazing variety of classic and bespoke machines. Heavy rain is forecast, but so far there's no more than a light drizzle to dampen the enthusiasm and the sun's trying its best to peep through.

Today is when The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride takes place worldwide and the Oxford event starts here. The DGR was started in 2012 by an Australian, Mark Hawwa with the idea that men might persuade friends, family and anyone else whose arm they could twist, to sponsor them to ride their classic bikes over a set course. The event is run in cities across the world on the last Sunday in September every year and this time over 125,000 riders are taking part in 700 cities in102 countries. The DGR is associated with the Movember movement, which also began in Australia. For Movember our menfolk seek sponsorship in November to grow a moustache, or "mo". The aim of both groups is to raise money for research into men's health, both mental and physical, and to increase public awareness of the health issues men face, focusing in particular on depression which in severe cases leads to suicide, and on prostate cancer, which can also be a killer. When beset by adversity men are renowned for their tendency to maintain a stiff upper lip, hirsute or otherwise, and one of the purposes of both the DGR and the Movember movement is to encourage them to be more open about dealing with their problems.

Despite the title of the event, a rider of any gender, with an appropriate motorbike can sign up to participate, and there are several women taking part at the Oxford gathering. There aren't age restrictions, either. Although some of the participants could well have been riding motorbikes for decades, there's a couple of riders carrying L plates, who are probably younger than their bikes.

There are rules. The motorcyclists are expected to behave in a gentlemanly way, stay legal, be respectful of others and resist the urge to exploit the full potential of their machines. The riders come from all walks of life but in this event they are all gentlemen.

There's a dress code too. Participants are encouraged to wear "dapper" attire. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "dapper" as "neat and precise" and whilst there are many suits, tweed jackets and polished brogues here at Wootton, there's also a degree of flamboyance on display. Conventional neck ties, bow ties and cravats abound and there are waistcoats in various

• *Making final adjustments*

• *A Harley with a mascot and a red laced rider on a Triumph*

• *Dressed dapper*

THERE ARE RULES. THE MOTORCYCLISTS ARE EXPECTED TO BEHAVE IN A GENTLEMANLY WAY, STAY LEGAL, BE RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS AND RESIST THE URGE TO EXPLOIT THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THEIR MACHINES!

materials and hues, and many of the riders proudly sport watch chains. Whilst some of the participants appear happier in their leathers, and there's at least one Hell's Angel with his Chapter's insignia emblazoned across his back, others are resplendent in plus fours. Footwear also expresses individual taste. Look down and you see regular biker boots alongside highly polished tan leather shoes with exaggeratedly pointed toes. Next to them are gleaming brogues, some with bright red laces.

There are many moustaches in evidence, and several of the bikes have moustache decals on their headlamps. The association with Movember has prompted numerous riders to adorn their top lips for the event. Many of the "mos" are obviously homegrown and they range from neatly trimmed whiskers, through fierce bushy growths to twirly handlebars that must have taken some time to cultivate. Some facial hair though, has clearly been stuck on for the occasion and one young man is having considerable difficulty with his mo, when it appears that the steam from his coffee is having a loosening effect on the glue. One of the young female marshals sports a jet black 'tache in support of the cause. Hers is firmly in place – maybe because she's kept clear of the coffee!

For anyone with even a slight interest in motorbikes, the machines are a joy, and the spectators as well as the riders are keen to pick their way amongst them just to admire. There's a variety of marques including Triumph, Honda, BMW, Harley Davison, Levis and a bright red Morgan three wheeler, which despite looking more like a car is classed as a motorcycle. Conversations flourish. People who had never met before chat about their bikes and one overheard earnest discussion about >>>

• *A rider checks his machine*

• *The lead riders are raring to go*

• *The pre-ride briefing*

• *Whiskers, waistcoat and Goldwing (above left) and some bikes had moustaches (above right)*

waxing, turned out not to be about moustache care, but about how best to protect panniers against the rain!

As the start time of 11.15am approaches, miraculously the clouds clear and the sun come out. Tension mounts as the riders are called together for a pep talk and to thank their sponsors. Then the group disperses to mount their bikes, the four lead riders assemble in line at the exit gate, and then comes the instruction everyone has been waiting for: "Gentlemen, start your engines."

There's a cheer as over three hundred motorcycle engines simultaneously roar into life. Despite the collective raw power the riders file out after the leaders in a controlled and orderly fashion to make their way to the centre of Oxford. They're off! Most participants are travelling solo, (with or without mascot!), but the Morgan has two occupants – wearing what look like pith helmets - and there are a few pillions and sidecar passengers joining the ride, which is expected to last about an hour. The route is to take them through the city, out along Five Mile Drive then back in a loop via Headington to finish up at the Victoria Arms public house in Marston where well deserved refreshments will be available.

Unsuspecting Sunday morning motorists in Oxford must have had quite a surprise to find themselves joined by a seemingly endless crocodile of motorcyclists, some of whom were wearing quite spectacular, even eccentric, gear and sitting astride machines that were in some cases equally spectacular. Pedestrians along the route were often treated to a cheery wave and a toot of the horn as the procession went past, and for anyone standing near the roundabout at the top of Five Mile Drive the sight of them all coming up the hill was awesome.

There was a glitch. By mid-morning traffic was building up and despite the precaution of having lead riders, mid-section marshals and back markers, one group became separated from the rest and followed a more circuitous route to the final destination. When the event organisers and those participants who arrived at the Victoria Arms at Marston on schedule found that a large contingent was missing there was a deal of consternation, but fortunately the unintentional diversion didn't take the break off faction significantly longer, and it was a great relief when everyone turned up at the right place in the end. The celebrations could begin!

It was an enjoyable and successful day. Although the predicted rain set in soon after the ride finished, the sun shone for its duration, so what could have been a soggy endurance test was an exhilarating outing. There was a great deal of camaraderie, and a real sense of achievement. New acquaintances were forged, united by a common interest and purpose. The event had given the participants the incentive to polish up their machines, and the opportunity to ride out in the company of other devotees, whilst at the same time raising thousands of pounds for a very worthwhile cause. The three hundred and eighteen Oxford riders alone raised nearly £24,000 in sponsorship money in support of research into prostate cancer and men's mental health. Coupled with the thousands raised worldwide, which reached a total of around $7 million, this should go some way to helping prevent men's deaths from cancer and suicide. A job well done.

Something momentous did happen that Sunday! ◆

THE INSTRUCTION EVERYONE HAS BEEN WAITING FOR: "GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES."

• *The Morgan three wheeler*

Pictures by Jeremy Wilton

• *Gail Seward and Mon Barbour*

• *The team at Krazy Horse*

• *Martin Clarke and Suzy Cole (above left); Paul Beamish, Stephanie Taylor and Lee Kirkpatrick (above right)*

IT'S KRAZY AT HEATH FARM!

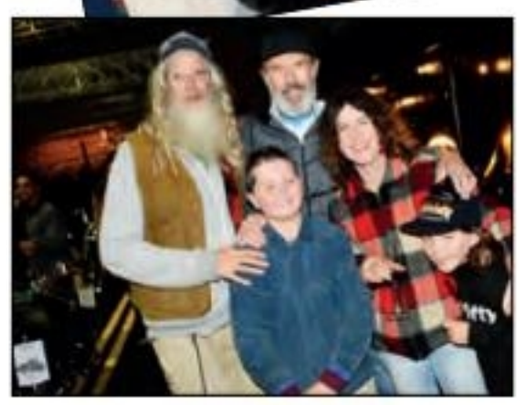
Krazy Horse Farm House motorcycle centre opened last month.

Based at Heath Farm in Swerford, between Banbury and Chipping Norton, the motorcycle centre is more beards and bikes than showroom glitz, full of character and very welcoming.

It is the fourth Krazy Horse dealership in the UK and specialises in MV Augusta, Norton, Indian and Fantic Caballero models as well as the UKs only two Arch motorcycle models, the company founded by Keanu Reeves.

John Seymour, dealer principal, said: "We want to have something that's a little unusual, a little more bespoke for people's choice."

It's not all highly expensive machinery however. John said: "We do start at a sensible level. The Fantics start at around £5,000 for the 250cc version."



• *Andy Spellman and John Seymour (above); Polly Parkinson (above right); the Bessant family (right)*

THE BOXING HARE

SWERFORD

We arrived for lunch on a Thursday afternoon to be warmly greeted by Antony and his partner, Stacey, now the proprietors at the Boxing Hare.

My companion and I were really looking forward to a 'ladies that lunch' kind of afternoon!, ***writes Gail Seward***.

Antony has spent extensive time in the restaurant trade, having opened his first venue, "The Canal Brasserie", a much sought after destination restaurant in West London, in 1987. It became a finalist in *TimeOut* 'Best Modern British Restaurant' awards.

We were seated in the light and airy restaurant and handed our menus which held a fabulous selection of mouth watering dishes and we soon found ourselves deliberating over them intently. Finding a menu you are interested to sample always fills me with delight. There is nothing worse than feeling excited to eat out and then struggling to pick one dish that tickles your taste buds. This is not something you need fear in Swerford.

The waiter soon arrived,and finally I decided on the Cotswold Gin and beetroot cured sea trout starter (I admit the gin swung it for me!) with pan roast local venison with a port jus for main; my companion settled on the warm salad of cuttlefish and chorizo followed by Creedy Carver duck confit potato cake, broad beans, peas and red wine jus

Offered homemade bread by our waiter, we sat and chatted happily in the pleasant surroundings, a million miles from the rush of a Thursday afternoon at work

When it arrived, the starter was absolutely delicious; one of the finest I have eaten and beautifully displayed. My companion's was equally as good. When the main arrived we were delighted to see the same

attention to detail and the aroma was beautiful, a feast to the eye and palate. The food is clearly prepared to the highest standard, and every mouthful of my venison was delectable.

Antony was reunited with his head chef, Nicholas Anderson, having worked harmoniously together for four years during the 1990s. Nick then went on to own and run two extremely successful restaurants.

During this time in Nicholas' career, he amassed 3 AA Rosettes, 6/10 in the Good Food Guide and most notably, two Michelin Stars.

Added to this, Kate Anderson, The Boxing Hare's excellent sous chef brings with her an expertise in pastry making. Kate's' talents also extend into making homemade bread, delectable puddings, ice cream and sorbets.

Stacey popped over to see how we were getting on.

Originally from Denmark, former actress Stacey is the perfect host with her friendly and flamboyant nature. Her recommendation for a little mid-afternoon tipple went down well, she suggested a gin with added collagen no less! Perfect we thought, killing two birds with one stone! It arrived in grand style and tasted delicious, what's not to like?

It was hard to decide on something from the desert menu as Kate had designed a wonderful selection of delectable puddings. We were full already but just couldn't miss out on trying one. After a little more deliberating we plumbed for chocolate fondant with salted caramel sauce and Iced peanut butter parfait.

More deliciousness! The taste was sublime.

The Boxing Hare is gaining a good reputation locally, with lovely views over the Cotswold hills. It is the perfect setting for long, cosy evenings to be enjoyed with family or friends. It is also an ideal location to host a special occasion.

If you haven't already tried it yet, I can highly recommend, but be sure to book!

A warm friendly welcome and delicious food awaits. ◆

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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TAKE IT SLOW!

PERFECT POST SHOPPING COMFORT FOOD

BEEF POT ROAST

Nothing beats a comforting pot roast with a deliciously rich gravy when you get back from Christmas shopping! This is virtually impossible to mess up and it's perfect in the oven or slow cooker. You don't need any real cooking skills as it comes out perfectly every time. Get it prepared before you hit the shops and your dinner basically cooks itself while you enjoy a festive day out.

You can pop your veg into the pot as well, so simply add a crusty loaf of bread to soak up the juices and the job is done!

What you'll need (serves 6):

2 tablespoons olive oil
2-3 lb boneless beef chuck, blade or shoulder of beef
2 tins of condensed mushroom soup, undiluted and heated
2 onion, chopped into big chunks
2 cups hot water
6 carrots peeled and cut into big chunks
3 sprigs fresh rosemary
3 sprigs fresh thyme
1 beef stock cube
1 red wine stock pot

Salt and black pepper

What to do:

Heat the oven to 130°C. Sear the meat in a pan, just enough to brown the outside, then place it into a big casserole dish on top of the chopped onions and carrots.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the soup, water, beef stock cube and the stock pot. Season well with salt and black pepper and pour over the meat. Add the herbs, cover and into the oven it goes. At such a low temperature you can leave it there for up to eight hours and it will be so tender it will fall apart!

Other options:

If you'd prefer to cook this in a slow cooker, follow the instructions in the same way, putting all the ingredients into your slow cooker, then cook on 'low' for 6-8 hours.

If you don't need all day on your shopping trip, you can even speed it up and get the same results. Either cook for two hours at 180°C in the oven or for 3-4 hours on 'high' in the slow cooker.

CIDER MONTH IS IN FULL SWING

Volunteers from the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) are celebrating cider and perry having organised a number of events across the country including cider trails, tastings and apple picking adventures.

CAMRA promotes the production of real cider now because it is a very active time for cider makers when production is in full flow and producers are harvesting the fruit.

Unlike real ale, which can be made at any time of the year, real cider and perry can only be made when the fruit is ripe and is tied to a natural cycle of the apple and pear trees found in orchards around the country.

Andrea Briers, Chair of CAMRA's Cider and Perry Committee said: "Real cider and perry are traditional British products that take a significant amount of time, dedication and effort to produce. Orchards take generations to grow and the traditions of cider making are usually passed down through families.

"You simply can't make cider in a day, which is why we're celebrating our nation's producers and raising awareness of this fantastic drink. I hope that everyone finds a delicious cider or perry to suit their tastes this month!"

To learn more about CAMRA Cider Months, you can visit www.camra.org.uk/cider/campaigns/cider-and-perry-months

THE KINGHAM PLOUGH

RENOWNED FOODIE PUB WITH ROOMS

Christmas party bookings now being taken

The Kingham Plough, was recently taken over by experienced hospitality operators, Matt and Katie Beamish, who, with new head chef, Jonny Pons, will continue to offer a superlative stay whilst showcasing the very best fresh, local, produce on its regularly changing menus.

Christmas party menu available 1st - 24th December
Vegetarian options
Two courses for £28. Three courses £34
Available at both lunch and dinner
Pre-booking essential!

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VEG OUT!

EASY COOK FOR THE END OF A HARD DAY SHOPPING

VEGGIE TAGINE

You don't need to be following a vegetarian diet to enjoy this dish. It's 'meaty' and fulfilling, thick, rich and full of flavour. Serve with hot pitta bread and the whole family will love it - we promise!

What you'll need (serves 4):

1 tsp saffron
600ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp olive oil
2 red onions, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
3cm piece root ginger, finely chopped
1 red chilli, seeded and chopped
30g butter
4 large carrots, sliced
4 large potatoes, peeled and diced
1 tsp cinnamon
2 parsnips, peeled and chopped
2 sticks celery, chopped
250g mushrooms, whole
2 tsps coraander seeds, crushed
zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 lemon, sliced
Salt and black pepper
225g pitted olives
Fresh chopped parsley, to garnish

What to do:

Heat the oven to 130°C or the slow cooker to 'low'.

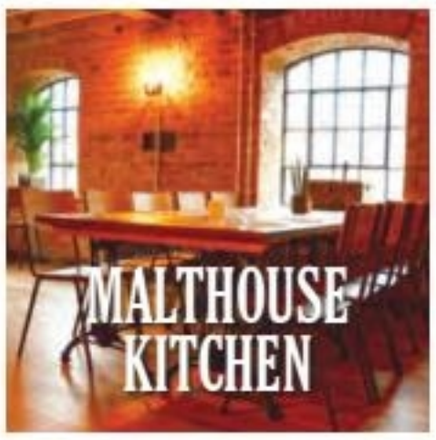
In a large casserole dish or a tagine (or in a pan if you're using a slow cooker), heat the oil and add the onions. Cook slowly for about ten minutes, until they are soft and translucent. Add the garlic, ginger and chilli and stir for a few more minutes until it smells gorgeously fragrant. Transfer to the slow cooker if you're using it, or into a dish to set aside if not.

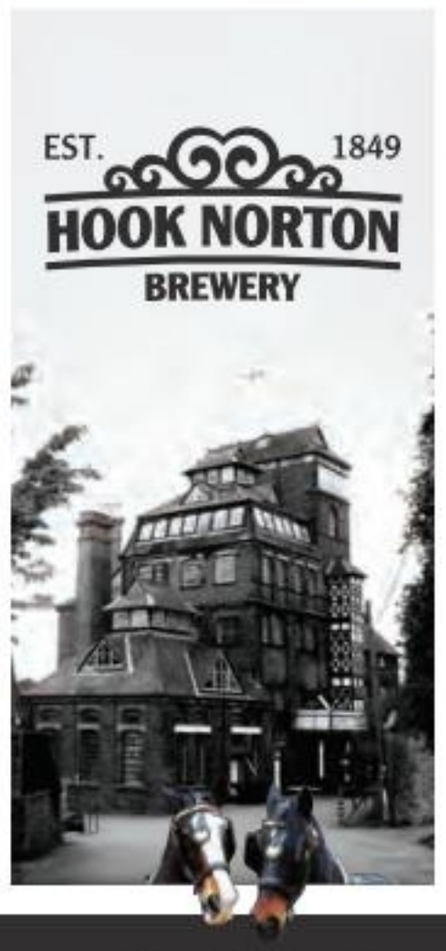
In the same casserole dish, melt the butter then add in the chopped carrots, potatoes, celery and parsnips. Cook for around ten minutes until the veg is browned on all sides. Add the stock, coriander seeds, lemon zest, sliced lemon and the lemon juice, mushrooms, salt and pepper and cinnamon.

Either transfer to the slow cooker, cover and cook on 'low' for seven hours. Or combine mix with the onion mixture and leave it all in the casserole dish (or tagine) and cook for the same time in the oven.

Prior to serving, stir through the olives and remaining fresh herbs.

THERE'S MORE THAN JUST BEER HERE!





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Hook Norton Brewery, Brewery Lane, Hook Norton, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 5NY

SWEET TOOTH

THE END TO A PERFECT EVENING

CHERRY AND ALMOND CLAFOUTIS

This delicious cherry clafoutis is laced with ground almonds and tastes divine. You can make it ahead of time, then simply warm it in the oven and serve with whipped cream and a sprinkling of toasted almond flakes on top. After this, all you'll want to do is curl up by the fire with a hot chocolate. Night night!

What you'll need (serves 6):

3 large eggs
60g caster sugar
60g plain flour
300ml milk
60g ground almonds
500g cherries, pitted and halved

What to do:

Preheat oven to 180°C and lightly grease a 20cm baking tin or heavy skillet.

In a large bowl beat the eggs with the sugar. Add the flour, milk and almonds and mix well. Then layer the cherries in the bottom of the baking tin and pour the mixture over the top.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes or until the clafoutis is golden coloured and set in the centre.

Cover with foil and allow to cool if you're saving it for later. Then when you're ready to heat it up, set the oven to 160°C and warm the clafoutis, covered, for about 15 minutes.

Note: This is better warm than piping hot.

ROSE AND CROWN
CHIPPING WARDEN

NEWLY OPEN
SPORTS BAR
3 LARGE TELEVISION SCREENS SHOWING BOTH SKY & BT SPORTS
POOL TABLE AND DARTS
OPENING TIMES
MONDAY-THURSDAY 4.00pm-11.00pm
FRIDAY-SATURDAY 12.00pm-12.00am
SUNDAY 12.00pm-11.00pm
AMPLE FREE PARKING AT REAR
WANTED: BAR STAFF
We plan opening phase 2 shortly and are looking for staff to work Thursdays, Fridays Saturdays and Sundays.
please email: roseandcrown@chippingwarden.net

• *Daventry Food Festival in full swing (above); Chef Patti Sloley during her cookery demonstration (below)*

CROWDS FLOCK TO A FANTASTIC FOOD FESTIVAL

"The busiest I've ever seen Daventry" – that was the word on the High Street at Daventry Food Festival recently. Blue skies and a colourful display of stalls drew the crowds to the town centre for the festival, organised by Daventry Town Council.

Mayor of Daventry, Cllr Mike Arnold opened the event with a mouth watering cookery demonstration from celebrity chef Patti Sloley.

There was an eclectic mix of more than 50 traders offering everything from pies to prosecco, cakes to curries.

• *Daventry WI*

• *Mayor of Daventry Cllr Mike Arnold with chef Patti Sloley*

• *Farmer Lou*

• *Goddard & Page Cheese*

• *Roberto's Deli*

• *Friar's Farm*

The *Four Shires* Good Food & Drink Guide

THE ANTELOPE INN

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01926 651188
THEANTELOPE-INN.COM

Come and experience the warm friendly atmosphere of our traditional 18th century English country pub. Serving fine wines, real ales and great tasting food, The Antelope in Lighthorne is the perfect place for business lunches, dinner with friends or meeting the family for a Sunday roast. Dogs welcome.

THE CROWN INN

MILL LANE
CHURCH ENSTONE
CHIPPING NORTON OX7 4NN
01608 677262
CROWNINNENSTONE.CO.UK

The Crown at Church Enstone, is a traditional Inn, Bar and Restaurant, championing the very best locally-sourced produce. From Friday 29th November to Monday 23rd December, enjoy a special Christmas Party Menu at lunch and dinner: £20 for 2 courses or £25 for 3 courses.

FAWSLEY HALL HOTEL & SPA

FAWSLEY, NR DAVENTRY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE NN11 3BA
01327 892000
HANDPICKEDHOTELS.CO.UK/ FAWSLEYHALL

Our award winning Cedar Restaurant and Tudor Bar lounge offers you two delicious dining styles and seasonal menus. Visit during the coming months and experience a warm, friendly atmosphere, cosy sofas, open fires and magical Christmas trees. Festive menus now available to book, including our Santa Sunday lunch!

THE GEORGE & DRAGON

CHURCH LANE
SHUTFORD, BANBURY
OXFORDSHIRE OX15 6PG
01295 780320
THEGEORGEANDDRAGON.COM

Open daily from 12, the pub has a lovely beer garden for summer sun and a real wood fire to warm you after winter walks. Food served every day except Wednesday. Fresh pizza served Friday - Monday evening - takeaway available. Afternoon Tea can be booked any day. Bookings taken for private parties.

MALLORY COURT COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL & SPA

HARBURY LANE, ROYAL
LEAMINGTON SPA CV33 9QB
01926 330214
WWW.MALLORY.CO.UK

December celebration lunches for parties of 6 or more from £39.50pp. Festive afternoon tea £27.50pp. Award winning seasonal dining in The Dining Room from £65pp. Or relax in The Brasserie… Seasonal two course lunch £25.50 pp. Festive afternoon tea £27.50pp. Festive three course dinner £34.50pp.

THE NEW INN

45 MAIN ROAD
MIDDLETON CHENEY
BANBURY OX17 2ND
01295 710978
NEWINNMIDDLETONCHENEY.CO.UK

The New Inn is a family and dog friendly pub in the heart of Middleton Cheney, with a gorgeous function room available for hire. With a newly launched menu, you'll enjoy delicious home cooked, locally sourced English pub food and a great selection of drinks in a relaxed and friendly environment.

ROSE & CROWN CHARLTON

MAIN STREET, CHARLTON
BANBURY OX17 3DP
01295 811317
THEROSEANDCROWNCHARLTON.CO.UK

A quintessential English family run pub in the small picturesque village of Charlton. The stone thatched building is complemented by a picturesque beer garden. Dating back to the 17th Century, its welcoming atmosphere makes it an ideal venue for a home cooked meal, excellent wine menu and cask ales.

ROSE & CROWN CHIPPING WARDEN

BANBURY ROAD
CHIPPING WARDEN OX17 1LF
07939 574560
ROSEANDCROWN@ CHIPPINGWARDEN.NET

Phase one: The Sports Bar now open. With three large television screens showing both Sky and BT sports. Also a pool table and darts. Cask ales include Doombar and Hooky.
Phase Two: The lounge and snug to open shortly.We look forward to welcoming you to our new venture.

THE EDEN HOTEL COLLECTION IS A WINNER

The Eden Hotel Collection, a luxury collection of nine UK boutique hotels, has won the best Emerging Talent Initiative at the Caterer.com People Awards 2019.

The awards recognise the bravest and best talent initiatives in the UK hospitality industry, with the Emerging Talent Initiative specifically recognising those that push boundaries, nurture talent early on and deliver measurable results.

Lisa Redding, Head of HR at the Eden Hotel Collection, comments: "We developed the Elan Spa Academy as a new concept to nurture our own talent within the Eden Hotel Collection, giving gifted young people an opportunity to earn whilst learning and progress via an apprenticeship route. Breaking the stigma around apprenticeships is hugely important in tackling the skill shortages across the hospitality and beauty industries and we're delighted to be recognised for our part in this."

The Eden Hotel Collection consists of nine luxury hotels, restaurants and spas, icluding, in the *Four Shires*, Mallory Court, Leamington Spa. The Arden Hotel and Arden House in Stratford-upon-Avon and The Greenway Hotel and Spa, Cheltenham.

THE CROWN INN
CHURCH ENSTONE

Bar, Restaurant & Rooms

NEW 2-BED LUXURY HOLIDAY COTTAGE

A hidden gem located in the rural Oxfordshire village of Church Enstone, the perfect spot for any occasion from a spontaneous lunch to celebratory dinner, in either our flagstoned bar area, restaurant, conservatory or our secluded garden.

Our friendly staff offer a relaxed and informal atmosphere welcoming visitors and locals alike.

Our Conservatory and dining room are available for Christmas Parties.

5 LUXURY EN-SUITE ROOMS

FOR TABLE BOOKINGS PLEASE CALL US ON:

01608 677262

MILL LANE, CHURCH ENSTONE, CHIPPING NORTON OX7 4NN
WWW.CROWNINNENSTONE.CO.UK

LOCAL BARMAN WINS NATIONAL HOSPITALITY AWARD

A barman at Billesley Manor, based in the heart of Shakespearean England, has won a national award thanks to his outstanding customer service and personal approach.

Samuele Cucino was named 'Shining Star' at the Boutique Hotelier Personal Service Star Awards held in Olympia recently.

Over the past 12 months, Samuele has helped to organise a number of events as well as supporting the opening and setting up of the new bar, which is attached to the gorgeous new Topiary Suite, part of the multi million pound refurbishments that have taken place at the hotel.

Samuele said: "I am so excited to have won this award! To even have been nominated was a huge honour, so I'm over the moon to have won."

For more information on Billesley Manor, please visit www.billesleymanor.com.

LEIDERHAUSEN AND STEINS

The Wriggly Monkey Brewery Bavarian style Oktoberfest was held last month and was a huge success.

The brewery has gone from strength to strength since it opened exactly a year ago and supplies some of the best local pubs, including The Muddy Duck in Hethe and The Horse and Groom in Caulcott.

WELL BEING DOG

When staff and students arrived back at North Leamington School after their school break, they were thrilled to be introduced to a new member of staff joining the team.

North Leamington School has become the latest school in the area to introduce a therapy dog to their staff and pupils. Lulu, is a five month old Cockapoo who has begun working at the school helping both students and staff improve their overall wellbeing.

NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

Teachers and students at Northampton High School have been celebrating after being awarded the highly regarded British Council eTwinning National eTwinning Award recently.

Northampton High was awarded the prize for an outstanding contribution to international school collaboration. To secure the award, the local school worked in partnership with pupils in five other countries – Spain, France, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia - to create an outstanding project using digital collaborative tools.

eTwinning, the digital community for schools has seen over 700,000 teachers from 44 countries across Europe and beyond register since 2005. The programme is funded by the European Commission as part of the Erasmus+ programme and managed in the UK by the British Council. The eTwinning National Award is issued to schools that produce outstanding work as part of their eTwinning partnership.

NAME CHANGE FOR BANBURY SCHOOL

Wykham Park Academy's Space Studio is now the 'Futures Institute' a name which underlines the school's focus on teaching the job skills of tomorrow.

Students at the 'Futures Institute' will undergo transdisciplinary learning, honing vital skills over a broad range of disciplines sought after by industry recruiters.

WORDS: Bruce Cox
PICTURES: Manuel Harlan

• *Dan Partridge as Danny and Louis Gaunt as Kenickie (front) and the T-Birds in the UK and Ireland tour of Grease*

• *Eloise Davies as Frenchy and Peter Andre as Teen Angel in the UK and Ireland tour of Grease*

TAKING A TIMEWARP TRIP

AND TALKING WITH PETER ANDRE

• *Dan Partridge as Danny and Martha Kirby as Sandy*

We recently took a timewarp trip back to our teenage years courtesy of the New Theatre, Oxford and the musical *Grease* and so thoroughly enjoyed the experience that we wished we could have them all over again. With the proviso that we knew then what we know now, of course!

The now legendary musical originally opened in Chicago in 1971, followed by a move to New York's Broadway in 1972, where it received seven Tony Award nominations, including one for Best Musical. During the show's eight year run, actors including Patrick Swayze and John Travolta (both little known at the time) appeared in the production in the lead male role of bad boy, Danny Zuko, with Richard Gere finally going on to star as Danny in the 1973 London premiere after understudying it several times in the States.

The 1978 film adaptation starring John Travolta and Olivia Newton John, is the highest grossing live action screen musical of all time (when the figures are adjusted for inflation) and celebrated its 40th anniversary last year.

Making a high profile appearance in the current UK touring production is Peter Andre, even though it is the cameo role of the 'teen angel' that appears to one of the female characters in a dream sequence midway through the show. So the fact that the teen angel doesn't come on until after the show's interval gave us time to put a few questions to Peter.

Were you looking forward to taking on the role of Teen Angel?

Very much so. Even though it's a small part it has always been such an iconic and significant one in both the stage production and the film. The message he brings is strong too. As teenagers we all go through that phase of saying "I don't want to go to school" but what the Teen Angel is saying is "listen, it's not cool to drop out" and getting that across in a way that kids enjoying the show will listen to and hopefully agree.

What inspired you to take on the role?

I was offered the main part of Danny years ago but I couldn't do it because of the length of the tour. So when it was announced that the show would tour the UK again I said to my manager that

• *Louis Gaunt as Kenickie (centre) in the UK and Ireland tour of Grease*

I would love to do something but again that I wouldn't be able to commit to the whole thing. Colin Ingram, the producer, mentioned the role of Teen Angel and I said that was perfect.

• *Martha Kirby as Sandy and Dan Partridge as Danny*

Grease has been part of your life since you were a child. Why do you think it has had such an impact – not just on you but of generations of youngsters?

I think it encapsulated most teenagers – what they were really thinking and feeling. You start getting feelings for other people and your bond with friends is really tight. I think that, for me, I wanted to be Danny. I felt I could identify with him in some ways as well. Like where he was kind of acting cool but was really a softy and a lot of it was bravado – that was me. Really liking the girl but not wanting to show he was too keen, that was me too.

Do you think that 'going back to the 1950s' will resonant with younger audiences?

We all know the original 50s approach but felt the new generation might not really get it. Now it is not too fluffy or too sugar coated. It's grittier and the dancing more contemporary, thanks to choreographer Arlene Phillips. Now it is almost as if it's gone full circle and is back to the original way that the stage musical was before it became a film – something set in the past but with a really contemporary feel. ◆

• *Left to right: Natalie Woods as Jan, Eloise Davies as Frenchy and Tara Sweeting as Marty*

PICTURES FROM THE PAST

OUR NOVEMBER PICTURES FROM THE PAST FEATURES PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN THE 1960s

ARMY OFFICER

We think that in fact, the gentlemen in the pictures are in fact members of St John Ambulance. The pictures were taken outside Cornhill in Banbury.

MY OLD SWEET...

This picture shows the interior of a sweet shop from many years ago! We can make out Smarties in boxes, Galaxy bars and something called 'Tiffin' Wholenut chocolate and Fruit Pastilles at 1'3d – that's eight pence in new money! There's also a Horlicks pump to dispense a steaming cuppa.

CAREFUL THERE!

This picture shows, we think, a thatcher cutting straw to match a length needed for roofing. The knife he is wielding looks quite large, we expect he was very careful at work!

DUKE OF BEDFORD 'LOVE IN'

This lovely picture shows a lady with a placard stating: 'If it's good enough for the Duke of Bedford, it's good enough for Wardington!' – Excellent – she has my sympathies. The Duke of Bedford was, of course, like Longleat's Lord Bath, quite an eccentric. He had probably just appeared in the press having agreed to a nudist, 'flower power' film being staged at Woburn Abbey.

FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION

By the time this magazine hits the shelves we'll have seen another Banbury Fair. Always a notable date, the Michaelmas Fair has been wowing those who visit for many years now. The fair moves throughout the *Four Shires*, Oxford, Woodstock, Daventry, Chipping Norton and Buckingham having similar attractions. Whilst not as large as those further north, the Michaelmas Fair that visits Banbury has an atmosphere all of its own!

OFF THE GROUND HEELS

MELISSA HITCHCOCK TALKS TO *FOUR SHIRES* ABOUT HER UNIQUE SHOES

When did the business start and how did you start it?

The business started in 2014 when I was on maternity leave in Brackley.

Where is it based - has it always been based here?

I am based at home in Northamptonshire.

What are the particular challenges facing the business at this time?

It's very tough for people to understand the unique design of the shoe. Raising brand awareness is the challenge at the moment.

Back in May this year I spent a week on the ITV 'This Morning' programme. Ruth Langsford (Eamon Holmes' partner) wore my shoes for the week and she absolutely loved them.

Have you made many mistakes as you have built up the business?

Yes, the biggest involved working with a shoe factory in China. I invested quite a bit of money making my first set of shoes. They were perfect and we sold out within days when the shoes were advertised. I invested all the sale money and more in a second, larger batch. When these were returned to us here in the UK the shoes were unwearable!

Do you employ people or do you 'DIY'?

Luckily, I have found a wonderful technologist in Italy. Max Diament is a leading shoe designer who works with handmade lasts and he creates wonderful handmade shoes. Our factory is based in Chippoletti in Italy.

Do you have a particular fondness for working within the *Four Shires*?

I was brought up in Little Chalfont in Buckinghamshire and I have lived in Northampton and worked in Brackley. Yes, I like the *Four Shires*.

Did you always want to work within your chosen profession? If not what would you do?

No, I really had no idea that I'd be making my own shoes. I remember my partner and I were going to go out on a date night to mark the first anniversary of having my child. I had no high heels that didn't cause blisters so I thought, how do I remedy this?

What lessons have you learnt during your business career?

You have to believe in your product! I have had many knockbacks but I have never given up. Many big companies have tried to undermine my product but I won't give in.

Is the customer always right?

Yes, of course, I might have a customer who comes back to me and says the shoes aren't quite right… I will ask them to point me in the right direction.

Could you describe a typical working day?

I'm up at 6.30/7am and then I take the children to school, I clean the house, get ready for the day and then head off to work at a dental practice in Banbury. I come home, pick up the children, complete more chores and eventually get round to working on *Off the Ground*. It may be 1am before I go to bed.

How do you spend your spare time - what are your hobbies?

I've started an Open University course in meteorology! I use a telescope to study the sky – it's when I get all my best bright ideas!

If you could have played sport for your country what would it be?

Netball, definitely. I played goal attack at school and one year we went all the way to the national schools' finals – I was a good county player.

What book are you reading at the moment and what is your favourite?

I am reading the Nike boots story. I read a good deal, especially on my flights to Europe.

Favourite Film… and music?

I love the *Wolf of Wall Street* – and I love most music – *Queen* especially.

Marmite – yes or no?

Yes.

Is there someone in business you would like to emulate – or someone not necessarily involved in the business world?

Yes – I look up to Catherine Pavers, she started the Pavers shoe company with just £300. I met her once and she was very honest! She looked at my shoes at the time and said "I hate 'em!" She did give me some great advice however. She really put everything into her company and she didn't really reap a reward. It was done for her children.

Car or motorcycle?

Car.

What are your hopes for the future for the company?

As well as growing 'Off the Ground (OTG)' heels, I have aspirations to open a dental practice. I have worked in dentistry for the past 17 years as a registered dental nurse and practice manager. This work pays for the development of OTG. ◆

Find out more at:
www.offthegroundheels.co.uk

RESPECT AND DIGNITY

WITH COUNTRY FUNERALS, TOWCESTER

Between them, Shaun White and Melanie Dolega (pictured right) of Country Funerals have nearly 40 years in the funeral business behind them. Shaun has worked extensively throughout the home counties as has Melanie, working for well established funeral directors.

Melanie commented: "Having worked for other funeral companies, myself and Shaun decided it was time to set up on our own and bring all that was best practice from the other companies into ours. There were things that we thought were not quite right with some aspects of the other businesses and we were sure we could improve on that."

Shaun commented that the business is all about caring and helping people, when quite understandably they are feeling at their lowest.

"We like to feel that we are on the same wavelength as our customers," he said. "We try to offer them a choice. We aren't at all dictatorial – many funeral companies dictate what type of service you're going to get. We ask what our customers would like and we try to accommodate them."

One such example included a funeral for a Towcester Racecourse worker.

"We arranged for the hearse to be driven around the centre of the course. This gave the gentlemen's colleagues the chance to wave him off at the racecourse… the family were sure that he would have approved," said Shaun.

• *The arrangements room*

On another occasion, the hearse followed a route well used by a local runner who had sadly passed away.

Melanie commented: "We always try to focus on the positives and in getting things right – that's imperative."

Whilst Country Funerals offers traditional church and crematorium funerals, it also offers advice on 'green' woodland burials and direct cremations.

"I feel that every family should have the chance to see their relatives buried with respect and dignity," said Shaun. "We can offer advice where families are looking at the low cost 'direct cremations' – there are options where services can be included in these types of funerals."

Country Funerals has a fleet of both traditional black hearses as well as silver Mercedes. They also offer the option of more unusual hearses, including horse drawn, motorcycle and adaptations for customer's own vehicles.

"One family we were working with wanted their own car used for the service, as the deceased had been very attached it. We adapted the back of the vehicle to accept the coffin," said Shaun.

It's these kind of little touches that set Country Funerals apart from others." ◆

› *With their dogs Breeze and Diesel*

• *Front of funeral home*

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Country Funerals
Towcester
Independent Funeral Directors

NO OBLIGATION QUOTES FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS
FUNERAL PRE PAYMENT PLANS
MEMORIAL HEADSTONES

01327 351500
www.countryfunerals.uk

1 Sponne House Centre
Walting Street West, Towcester NN12 6BY
enquiries@ countryfunerals.uk

BANBURY WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARD WINNERS

Banbury businesswomen were entertained by comedian Cerys Nelmes and adventurer Sarah Outen at the 2019 business awards ceremony held at the Wroxton House Hotel last month.

Sarah relayed her heroic tales of her most recent major expedition: London2London: via the World, an attempt to row, cycle and kayak 25000 miles around the Northern Hemisphere. The journey took 4.5 years and didn't run totally to schedule.

With six award categories, and 17 finalists, the awards celebrated a wide range of businesses. All 17 finalists were commended before each of the category sponsors announced the winner.

THE WINNERS OF THE 2019 BANBURY WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS WERE:

Bloxham Mill Business Centre – New Business Award:

◆ Samantha Stretton – Logicom Hub Ltd

Edd Frost & Daughters – Going the Extra Mile Award:

◆ Marisa Ramos – Highmarket House Care Home

Designed by Howie – Business Communicator of the Year Award:

◆ Caroline Deakin, Caroline Cares For You

Progress Accountants – Micro Business Woman of the Year Award:

◆ Laura Warren – Gymophobics

Jamie Briggs Removals & Storage – Business Woman of the Year Award (5+ employees):

◆ Liz Nicholson – Nicholsons Nurseries

Banbury Sound – Unsung Hero Award:

◆ Leah Boleyn – Your Events Team

Marie Parkinson, BWIB committee member, said: "The event saw nearly 70 guests come together to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of the finest business women currently working in the Banbury area. The calibre of entries this year was very high, resulting in some very worthy winners. There was hardly a dry eye in the house when the winner of the Unsung Hero category, Leah Boleyn of Your Events Team was announced. Fantastic stories and achievements all round."

info@banburywomeninbusinessawards.co.uk

• *left to right: Samantha Stretton, Liz Nicholson, Laura Warren, Caroline Deakin, Marrisa Ramos and Leah Bolyn*

CALLING ALL ENTREPRENEURS

The annual Kärcher Accumulator Challenge returns for a sixth year to raise vital funds for Katharine House Hospice this autumn.

Kärcher will give your business, college, school or community group £50 and five months to see what you can turn it in to!

Since launching in 2014 the Kärcher Accumulator Challenge has raised more than £55,000 for Katharine House. All of which has gone directly to supporting local families living with a life limiting illness. This year Katharine House faces a budgeted deficit of £435,000 due to higher demand for its services, increasing healthcare costs and government funding that is reducing as a proportion of those costs.

Laura Horton, Partnerships and Philanthropy Manager at Katharine House, said:

"The Accumulator Challenge is a brilliant way for businesses, schools and local groups to come together and create innovative and entrepreneurial ways of making as much money as they can. It's a great opportunity to build team spirit and support a local charity that works for local people.''

Every team who enters is invited to an awards ceremony in the spring where participation certificates will be awarded to all and trophies and Kärcher machine prizes are presented for the most creative idea and most funds raised in each team category.

Simon Keeping, Managing Director at Kärcher (UK) Ltd, said:

"Kärcher has a long association with the Katharine House Hospice and we're proud to support the vital work they do in our community. Any time we've thrown down the gauntlet our employees have always come up trumps - and with the creation of the Kärcher Accumulator Challenge six years ago, we've been able to amplify that in the wider community."

Teams can enter now at www.karcher.co.uk/khh

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"Kärcher has a long association with the Katharine House Hospice and we're proud to support the vital work they do in our community. Any time we've thrown down the gauntlet our employees have always come up trumps - and with the creation of the Kärcher Accumulator Challenge six years ago, we've been able to amplify that in the wider community."

Teams can enter now at www.karcher.co.uk/khh

WORDS: Tim Clarke, business and leadership coach

BEST OF BRITISH

What makes Britain great? Tim Clarke investigates some local talent: the Best of British in the *Four Shires*?

An astonishing six out of the 10 international F1 motorsport teams are based in the UK. Most of these are clustered in 'The Motor Sports Valley', an area comprising much of the *Four Shires* map. The suppliers to the motorsports business are all also largely based around the same area and a little further south east.

Tim talks to race mechanic Andrew Smith, a self confessed 'petrol head', who has worked throughout the industry for almost 30 years. He left school at 16 with three O-levels, and has recently been told he is 'the best in the world at what he does.'

Younger engineers see F1 as an 'untouchable world' and yet Andrew was lucky enough to get into it at a young age. He has also been defying stereotypes by working in the pit lanes for major teams at the age of almost 50 - twice the age of the average crew member. When not track side, Andrew has his own business working on historic cars, which might typically involve building a differential for a 60 year old Maserati near his home in Shenington.

How is it that so many of the world's F1 teams are in the UK?

It all stems back to post World War II. There were lots of talented aerospace engineers around and many flat disused airfields. Motor racing was very popular pre-war so it was a natural fit to start in this area. The concentration of talent in 'Motor Sports Valley' is attractive to international teams and government initiatives have helped in the past. The old adage is, 'Race on Sunday, sell on Monday'.

Formula 1 is a multi billion dollar business. At the heart of it in the past was the entrepreneurial team owners who wanted to race, pure and simple. Some may say these were the 'good old days'.

Putting sponsorship on cars was a new thing when money was tight. In the modern era, every inch of an F1 car is for sale to a sponsor - trucks and garage boarding too. The top teams are global brands and being in F1 is part of their marketing strategy to sell their products.

What's it like working in F1?

I have a love for motor racing and historic cars. I have been fortunate enough to have worked with some outstanding people in the world of motor racing from touring cars to Formula 1 and I have won at all levels I have worked in. My first season was with Prodrive in Banbury and the Ford Mondeos, winning the British Touring Car Championship in 2000. This set the bar very high. You cannot keep winning. Sometimes it is good to lose because, if you are diligent and have like minded people around you, from the losing comes the winning. It is so rewarding!

Formula 1 is one of the ultimate sporting arenas. The budgets are large which means the level of engineering you can put into the car is much higher than other formulas. I have been involved in winning three Formula 1 championships. It is so much harder to achieve than you can imagine, but you can only win as a team and you are only as strong as your weakest link.

What is it like when you win?

Sometimes it can be a sense of relief. So much can go wrong: mechanical failure, driver

Andrew Smith sprinting with a wheel over one third of his body weight

error or just plain bad luck if a safety car is deployed at a time not in your favour. In 2014 Mercedes won the constructors championship and that was a good Sunday. On Monday morning the Mercedes Benz canteen was serving bacon rolls for everyone. At our mid morning coffee break there was a glass or two of champagne. It was a great day which did not end there!

What is a pit stop like?

Don't let the adrenaline get hold of you: tell yourself to keep calm! The pit stop team train relentlessly. For the Le Mans 24 hour race you practise morning and night for an hour at a time. During the race you make a pit stop every hour. At the Le Mans 24 hour in 2019, the Ford GT team achieved the shortest cumulative pit stop time of all the GT Pro teams at Le Mans, proving that practice pays off.

What do you look forward to?

I love what I do, tinkering around with old cars or preparing modern racers. I now run my own company and this affords me more time to devote to my historic racing car preparation business. I have my contacts who call me in to help with a specific job. Its always nice to be involved in the modern stuff, working at Le Mans with the Ford GT this year in its last race was a special moment. The cars raced from flag to flag without incident: no small achievement. ◆

For more information visit www.classicandracing.co.uk

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AWARD WINNING OXFORDSHIRE CHARITY MARKS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Banbury based charity Cherwell Community and Voluntary Service (which incorporated the Banbury Volunteer Bureau) is 40 this year!

The CCVS is run entirely by volunteers, some of whom have been active volunteers at the CCVS for many years.

Nigel Randall, chairman of the charity, says the CCVS's anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate the application of the volunteers who give freely of their time.

The charity has two distinct operations: a volunteer driver service and a furniture recycling service.

Volunteer Pete Foster commented: "Where else can you get a three piece suite for £50?"

The furniture store has an annual turnover of about £20,000, showing how strong demand is for its service.

POINTS OF LIGHT AWARD FOR DAVE EARL

Banbury boxer Dave Earle has been presented with a 'Points of Light' award for his work using physical activity to tackle mental health issues. The award recognises volunteers who are making a change in their community. It was presented to Dave by Chancellor Sajid Javid at a Downing Street Black History Month reception in October. Dave is the founder of Tribus which combines physical activity, CBT and mentoring and has helped over 300 people with mental health difficulties and addictions.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENT

Banbury Chamber of Commerce are delighted to announce their speakers for their BCOC Live Event next month. As well as networking, the event, which takes place on November 21st in Banbury Town Hall presents an opportunity to browse exhibition stands, and find out what Banbury businesses are doing to ensure the future looks bright for employees, customers and the economy.

Under the theme of "Preparing Banbury for the Future" the keynote speakers include:

Simon Keeping, Managing Director, Karcher UK Ltd; Matt Hadlington, Senior Business Engagement Manager - HS2 Ltd; Debra Hunt, Owner, Doodledash Interiors; Dan Ludlow, Owner, Nothing but Footprints.

WHAT I SHOULD LOOK FOR IN A CONVEYANCER?

Buying or selling a property can be a stressful process, but there are some easy steps you can take to help to make the conveyancing process as smooth and as calm as possible.

Reputation and client satisfaction
Take time to research your solicitor or conveyancer. Recommendations by professionals, friends or family are a good starting point. Visit the solicitor's website and if they have client testimonials, have a read through. Some firms have profiles, photos and contact details of their conveyancers, so you will know who you will be dealing with. Law firms may also be accredited with The Law Society's Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS), providing evidence of a recognised quality standard. It is worth checking whether your preferred firm is so accreditated.

Transparent costs
Like with most services, you will probably want to get 2 or 3 quotes for your conveyancing work. Make sure you are comparing like-for-like quotes, that you see a breakdown of the fees and that these are transparent and fixed from the outset.

Regular communication
Property conveyancing is often dependent on a 'chain' and complications can arise that may hold the process up, so it is important your conveyancer keeps you informed of developments as they happen. When choosing your conveyancer, check how they will be communicating with you, for example, ask if they have direct dial and email, and can you check the progress of your matter online 24/7.

Spratt Endicott Solicitors has teams of property experts in Banbury, Bicester, Brackley and Buckingham. If you would like to talk to them about buying or selling a property, please contact Michael Weightman, Residential Property Manager, on **01295 204000** *or email* **conveyancing@se-law.co.uk**.

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• *Jonathan Walton, Will Farnborough and Anis Waiz*

• *John Skinner and Vashti Bedwell*

WHITLEY STIMPSON NETWORKING EVENT

Whitley Stimpson hosted an evening reception for local business professionals in the heart of Bicester last month. Cherwell District Council's Jenny Barker gave an interesting update on the current and future development of Bicester town centre and the surrounding area.

Laura Herbert of Whitley Stimpson commented: "Establishing a professional network is important to the success of any business. At Whitley Stimpson we are passionate about building relationships with both clients and business professionals."

• *William Jones (Fisher German) and Ian Parker*

• *Vicky Leeson and Laura Lewis*

• *Laura Adkins, Alan Morgan and Laura Herbert*

• *John Colquhoun and Caroline Pearce*

• *Neil Evans and Marie Morgan*

• *Stuart Haigh and Jenny Baker (CDC)*

• *Maria Cunningham and Jonathan Walton*

• *Linda Mustill and Gail Seward*

• *Stuart Haigh, Natalie Sansome, Marie Morgan and Vicky Leeson*

• *Molly Jackson, Maria Cunningham and Caitlin Wright*

• *Vashti Bedwell and Jackie Freshwater*

• *Katrina Sargent and Maria Cunningham*

HS2 land take; what am I entitled to?

Earlier this year I wrote about what affected parties should do on receipt of Notices from HS2. HS2 have recently served a considerable number of Notices in this area and it is pertinent to review what those affected are entitled to claim. From speaking to parties affected by the scheme, there still appears to be significant confusion as to what HS2 should be paying.

The overriding principle for any compensation claim is that where land is taken by a scheme, the claimant is entitled to recover their loss, so far as money allows. Such assumes a willing buyer and purchaser (there being no additional payment for the loss being by compulsion), ignoring any effect of the scheme on values. The claimant is under a duty to mitigate their losses; one should not therefore act in such a way as to increase a claim on the assumption that the acquiring authority will pay for such.

The claim can be broken down into four headings:

Value of land taken is fairly clear, being the value of any land acquired for a scheme. Loss of value to the remainder of the property is either **Severance** (where an area is severed from the remainder) or **Injurious Affection**, which broadly covers the difference in value of the property before and after the scheme. The majority of other elements of claim fall under **Disturbance**, which is very wide ranging but might include matters such as claimants time, crop loss and professional fees. Note that where a property has in some way increased in value due to the effect of the scheme, such can be balanced against other elements of claim.

Where HS2 have served permanent land take Notice under a General Vesting Declaration (GVD), a claim can be made against HS2 and, subject to a Section 52 request being made and all required information being present, the acquiring authority are obliged

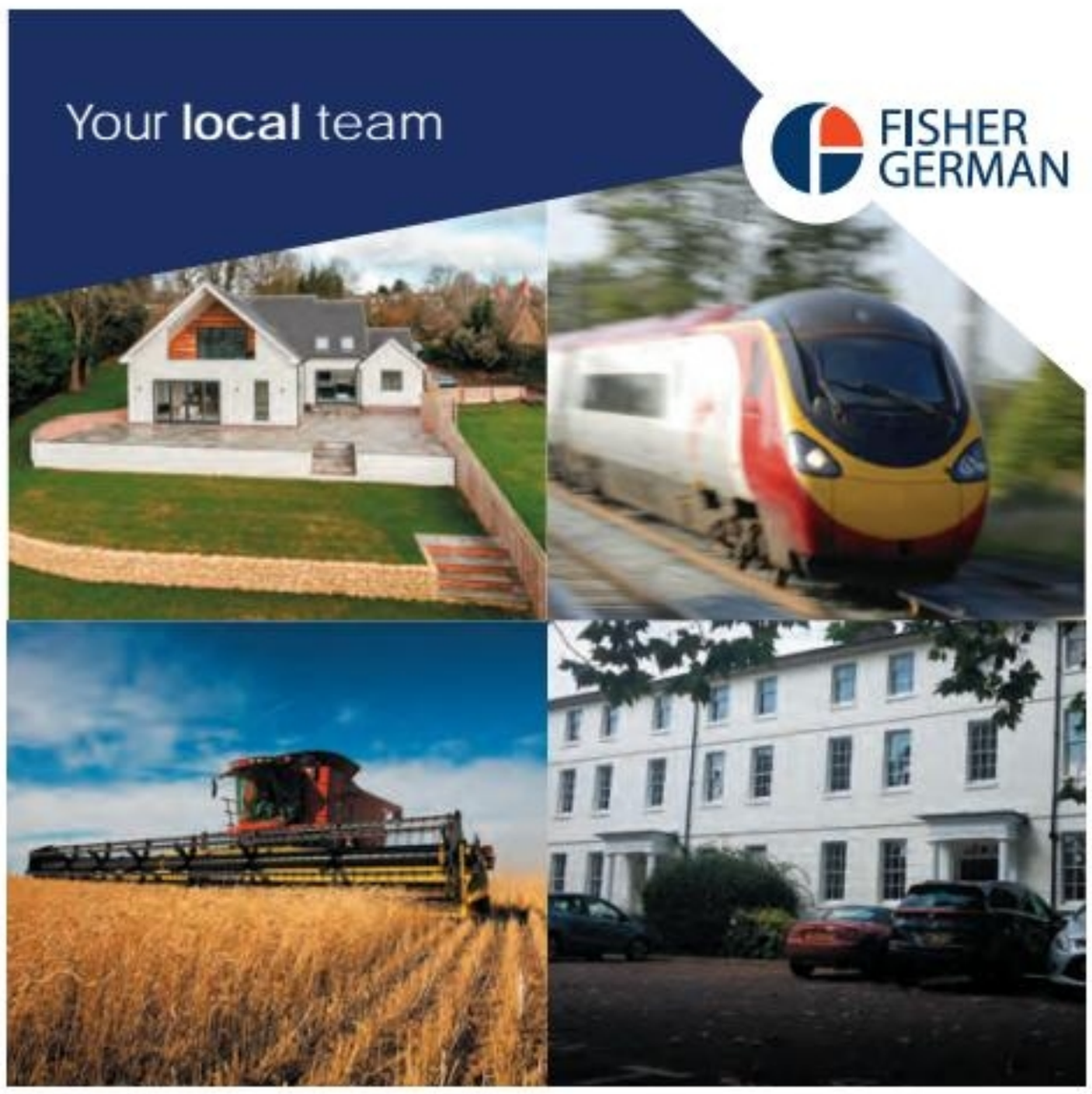
Jonathan Perks

to make a payment within three months of receiving the claim. Note that at this stage, the payment will be based on 90% of the acquiring authorities estimate of compensation. There may therefore be a gap between what the claimant expects to receive and what is actually received. Negotiations between the parties can take place to allow further payments to be made once the figures are closer together, but the final 10% of the payment won't be made until negotiations have concluded.

Those who are subject only to temporary land take, during the period of possession, are only able to make a disturbance claim. There is no immediate right to compensation for the effect of the scheme. Only once the land is handed back to the claimant subject to alternations from the original holding (such as environmental works), will a claim for injurious affection arise. As temporary possession may be for several years, there are many claimants who will see loss of value to their property today but are not eligible for significant compensation for some time yet.

Those who have no land taken and cannot take advantage of the non-statutory schemes put in place (such as Need to Sell), must wait until a year after the railway is running to make any form of claim. Such is under quite different rules and can be advised upon closer to the time.

Compulsory purchase is an exceptionally complicated area of work and is becoming increasingly specialised. If you are affected by a compulsory purchase scheme and need advice as to how best to deal with the acquiring authority, call Jonathan Perks at our Banbury office (**01295 226282**) for a no-obligation discussion or email him at **jonathan.perks@fishergerman.co.uk**



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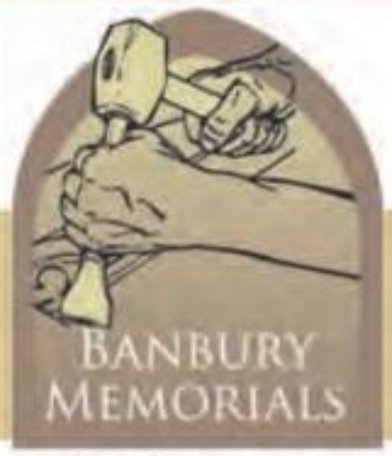

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• *Vienna Festival Ballet Company performing Snow White*

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Classical ballet takes centre stage once again when the highly acclaimed Vienna Festival Ballet Company returns to Banbury. Their original production of *Snow White* will dazzle the whole family, telling the timeless fairytale of a journey through a magical world of hip-hopping dwarves, an enchanted mirror, and a poisoned apple in pursuit of Prince Charming.

Set to an array of specially written orchestrated pieces, this classically rendered ballet was well received at its premiere in 2013, described simply by the *Burnley Express* as 'stunning'!

Don't miss this unique opportunity to see the full company of Vienna Festival Ballet perform this classic magical tale in The Mill's intimate auditorium.

Snow White will be at The Mill on Friday 6th December with performances at 5pm and 8pm.

Also back at the Mill Theatre by popular demand, stars from the West End present a magical couple of hours of entertainment featuring hits from the musicals along with the best of Christmas song in *West End at Christmas*.

The talented cast has starred in many West End productions and national tours including *Les Misérables, We Will Rock You, South Pacific, Starlight Express, Phantom Of The Opera* and *Wicked*, to name but a few!

"This wonderful concert guarantees to bring you joy and fill you with Christmas cheer" *(Evening Post)*.

West End at Christmas is at The Mill on Wednesday 11th December at 2.30pm and 7.30pm.

And finally, join the Victorian era's finest time travelling magicians as they tackle one of the festive season's most iconic tales; Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* adding their own blend of fantastical storytelling and mind bending illusions to the mix.

"The likeability of this dashing duo, and truly impressive sleight of hand magic, will put almost anyone in a good mood." *(The Scotsman)*.

Following a record breaking Christmas season at Oxford's Pegasus Theatre in 2017, early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment.

Morgan & West: A (sort of) Christmas Carol runs from 13th to 24th December 2019.

If that's not enough for you, The Mill's new season brochure launches on the 9th November with a dazzling array of comedy, dance, theatre and music to look forward to in 2020.

For all this and more head over to the website www.themillartscentre.co.uk or call the box office on 01295 279002. ◆

• *Stars from the West End are back by popular demand*

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